

तमसो सा ज्योतिर्गमय

SANTINIKETAN
VISWA BHARATI
LIBRARY

914

N 19

WEST OF SUEZ

S. NATARAJAN

WEST OF SUEZ

Foreword by

SIR S. RADHAKRISHNAN.

THE INDIAN SOCIAL REFORMER, LIMITED,
KAMAKSHI HOUSE,
BANDRA, BOMBAY

1938.

All Rights Reserved

PRINTED BY JAL B. DUBASH, MANAGER, THE COMMERCIAL
PRINTING PRESS, 105, COWASJI PATELL ST., FORT, BOMBAY.

TO MY FATHER

F O R E W O R D

My friend, Mr. S. Natarajan, who was on a visit to Europe last year, sets down in this book his impressions and memories. Curiosity is not perhaps a prominent characteristic of the Indian mind, but Mr. Natarajan is of the younger generation and to him every place and every person have an interest. He notices that Europe is full of psychological types as she is of wide contrasts of topography and climate. Though he has an eye for the oddities of men and women, he is at bottom a lover of his kind. Those who read this book will know how live is his mind, how sure his touch and how fairminded his judgments.

S. RADHAKRISHNAN

Oxford,
April 12, 1938. }

INTRODUCTION

When I returned from Europe last August, people kept on asking me what I had done during my visit. As most of them had been to Europe twenty years ago or contemplated going there within the next few years, I found it extremely difficult to tell an uninterrupted story without drawing on myself old reminiscences or hypothetical problems. That was one reason why I wrote down my experiences. Another was the fact that even today most people attach more importance to the written, and more so to the printed, word than to the spoken one. The opportunity to do so was first afforded me by *The Indian Social Reformer*. But for the discipline of writing every week for *The Reformer* the materials for this book would never have been got together.

Three others also have made the writing of this book possible and I am grateful to them. Mr. J. Mahlon Harvey of Paris set the limits and the pace of my stay in Europe. Sir Sarvapalli Radhakrishnan launched this book out with characteristic generosity. And the idea of having it published as a book first arose out of a letter from Mr. H. S. L. Polak.

S. NATARAJAN

BANDRA.

CONTENTS

CHAPTER	PAGE
I. THE WAY OUT	1
II. SETTLING DOWN TO EUROPE	12
III. NERVOUS STEPS IN NAZILAND	22
IV. A SCANDINAVIAN WELCOME	36
V. ONE HALF BERLIN	50
VI. A DAY IN DRESDEN	67
VII. BETWEEN TWO WORLDS—PRAGUE	74
VIII. INDIA IN LONDON	94
IX. THE OTHER HALF BERLIN	114
X. WITH THE NOT-SO-IDLE RICH	138
XI. THE HEART OF EUROPE	144
XII. A BUDAPEST WEEK-END	157
XIII. A SOUTH GERMAN MISCELLANY	168
XIV. A MINIATURE PARIS	186
XV. THE KING IS CROWNED	198
XVI. CUSTOMS AND CODES	215
XVII. YESTERDAY, TODAY AND FOR EVER	227
XVIII. THE MONSTER AND OTHER SCOTTISH MEMORIALS	238
XIX. A DIVIDED NATION	252
XX. INCIDENTS AND INDIVIDUALS	266
XXI. A JOURNEY AND A HALT	278
XXII. FAREWELL TO EUROPE	286
EPILOGUE	298

CHAPTER I

THE WAY OUT

The worst of being at sea, next to your inability to do anything, is the multitude of petty discomforts with which you are surrounded. You can retreat into no comfort, great or small.—*Leigh Hunt.*

For a long time my going to Europe was under consideration. Since my father's return from America in 1933 it was a settled fact that I was going and going soon at that ; but it was a different thing to fix a date. What actually decided that I was to go by the m. v. Victoria on February 12th, 1937, I do not know. Probably it was the result of letters arriving from American and European friends asking when my projected trip was to take place. The decision was made in December 1936 towards Christmas. It was some two weeks later that I started on my preparations.

Everything now had become a problem. Should I take one suitcase or two? Must all my clothes be winter clothes or should I carry lighter wear also with me? In my house there were already three members who had travelled before me, and in that I was to a certain extent fortunate. I knew what not to take from the mistakes made by them on their travels. I did not want to discuss it outside because of a tendency to avoid publicity to my plans. Particularly I kept the secret from friends who had relations in England. I did not want to be burdened with too many letters of introduction.

W E S T O F S U E Z

I told just a few of my friends under the seal of confidence and, from the knowing smiles their friends gave me when they happened to meet me, I know that the secret had grown now to be a secret from myself. A close friend of the family's who called on us the day I was to sail, advised me to be careful. He had been to Europe when he was just my age and he knew exactly what the "temptations" there were to a young man going out. The snare he feared in my particular case, he admitted on inquiry, was matrimony. Another warned me plainly of the dangers lurking in an England which held two million (the figure never seems to change) "surplus" women. I had the pleasure of informing both from Genoa on my way back that I was returning untrapped and that, barring eleven days on the voyage back, the dangers had been safely surmounted.

Advice varied according to the individual. One told me to take plenty of warm clothes; another warned me against taking too many warm clothes. Then my vegetarianism was deplored, my teetotalism made fun of. I was frankly informed that half the pleasures of foreign travel are lost to the teetotaller. On the other hand I was equally earnestly counselled to retain my vegetarianism at all costs in Europe—for the reason that it creates a good impression. Did I know French or German? If I did not I would miss half the fun. And so on.

It was no use, I found, listening to advice, either from those who had been to Europe or from those who had not. So I told as few of my friends as I possibly could and boarded the Victoria on the 12th February. Fortunately the time of sailing had been put off four hours. Otherwise I might have missed the boat. The long drawn-out parting has its uses. One can always get that forgotten item attended to before one sails. But even that has to end and at last I turned to see who my companions on board were.

THE WAY OUT

There was nothing inspiring in the faces and forms I saw on deck, composed in various degrees and attitudes of repose. All of them looked reserved and disinclined for any social life. A feeling of horror came over me at the thought that I was to spend eleven days with this unfriendly collection of freaks. I went down to my cabin and the atmosphere there was almost oppressive. And up I came again. On deck an elderly American lady was telling a young Chinese student, in a high pitched nasal voice, how to surmount the twin ills of asthma and sea-sickness. "For your asthma," she said as the Chinaman stroked his throat to overcome that heaving feeling with which one's stomach responds to the tumult of the sea, "you should snuff." Here, afraid that he might not have understood, she took a pinch of imaginary snuff and sniffed hard at it. "For your sea-sickness," she went on as the ship gave another lurch, "you must look up at the ceiling and drink lemon-squash with no sugar." As no pantomime could illustrate this, she ordered it out from the bar. The laughter that rose within me, was checked by the long-suffering look on the Chinaman's face. I admired his patience. It was the stuff of which martyrs are made. I felt, moreover, a malicious satisfaction at the thought that I was much better off.

At dinner that night I had as my companion a man who had resolved never to talk to others unless they talked first to him; and, as I was approaching the same nervous state in which I feared everyone to whom I spoke first would snub me, we might never have got to know each other. I made some inane approach, however, and received a curt reply; made another even more foolish and was rewarded by a more friendly attitude. At the end of the dinner we were fairly well acquainted with each other. By the end of the second day at sea I had got to know so many people on board—the faces assumed character, the forms meaning—that it was really

W E S T O F S U E Z

embarrassing. But my table companion, Mr. B. C. Patel of Hamburg, was constantly with me. Both of us had something to discuss, besides the idiosyncracies of our fellow voyagers.

The crowd on the voyage was a queer group. The Indians formed into two sections, those who preferred to move with the Europeans and those who were indifferent or diffident. And the two did not like each other. The European passengers by no means formed a homogeneous body. The Italian-speaking men moved freely on the Italian ship and the others tried to be as friendly as they could, to the Italians.

There were exceptions, notably an English couple who kept very much to themselves. Whatever happened we could see these two in that part of the ship, which they had by force of character and by silence made British territory. As a matter of fact, I found out after we got off the boat that they were quite sociable.

We had, too, with us Indians who, by virtue of having made the trip before, told us what to do and even more, what not to do. But not all their advice could cure one individualist of coming in to dinner in a pull-over. Then again, there were some who protested against the high rates of conducted tours and decided to see the sights on their own, even if they risked missing the boat. There were others who took down notes on all that they had seen. Among the many things I kept for the return journey were the Pyramids. This started a general controversy on the dangers of leaving things out. There were, lastly, Indians who felt that they were being slighted because they were Indians and they did much to make the Indian passengers as jumpy as escaped convicts.

I often thought on the ship that the sailors of Columbus had much reason in their revolt against authority. In my short eleven days I quite frequently felt homicidal at the monotony

THE WAY OUT

of it all. Skipping a meal is always to be avoided. It leads people to conclude you are sea-sick and sea-sickness does not bring you sympathy. It is rather an occasion for vapid jokes and for the laughing hint that it has no cure but must work itself out. I often dropped out lunch or dinner to avoid the tedium of going through the courses with the same faces all round.

We had our first taste of Europe's currency problems at Port Said where Arabs greeted us on shore selling Italian lira notes at 110 to the £, the exchange rate being 83·87 and the rate for "registered" lira 93. Attracted by this some of our passengers bought up liras as an investment, only to find out later that there were regulations restricting the import of lira into Italy to 330 liras per individual. They went over to the banker on the boat and were prepared to sell liras to him on any terms. He bluntly told them that he did not want liras and that they could wait till they came into Italy and have their money taken off them by the police.

The leading figure in this tangle was my cabin-mate, a police officer from the Punjab, and he came up to me and asked if "any of my set" wanted Italian money cheap. We had all bought our quota of 330 liras the day before at 110 and I told him so. He was very annoyed with the regulations and said he was going to smuggle the money in. When we pointed out to him that it was rather late in the day to talk of smuggling after he had announced it not only to about forty persons on deck but to the ship's bank as well, he decided to throw it into the sea rather than allow "these Italians" to have it. Even after we took off the excess from him, he still nursed a grievance and told us that his party had decided not to stay three weeks in Italy as they had planned to do originally. I was rather amused at the disregard for law and order shown by a policeman on holiday.

W E S T O F S U E Z

There were other things too that the Arabs sold at Port Said and as we were out at ten at night, it was all we could do to chase the hawkers off. One of our party was anxious to see Port Said life and it was rather embarrassing because she was a young woman. I admired the street Arab for his linguistic attainments and his sense of—self-respect, shall we say? He tries to sell anything, from stamps to obscene pictures, in four different languages, and he starts with the stamps working abruptly up to a climax. If, suffering a moral hurt, you ask him to go away, quick comes the retort, "You go away. I stay here." Port Said as a place where three Continents meet, has a reputation to live up to and it does. I found after an hour and a half of walking that I was a little unsteady on land, that the ground was behaving just as the deck had done.

The voyage was less monotonous after Port Said, partly because we saw land more frequently and partly because the Mediterranean was rough. We who were travelling for the first time, were extremely anxious to experience everything. We asked the veterans if the sea could be rougher than "this." But even on the last day with the sound of breaking glass all over and of waves dashing on the port-hole windows, we were told that the Indian monsoon had even more to show us. I was one of the few passengers who slept through the night between Naples and Genoa and I was awakened at 5 a. m. by the rattling of glasses and the crash of furniture. On my morning walk on deck, I found it impossible, at any rate difficult, to keep on my feet. As I went for my bath my steward warned me to be careful because accidents had happened in calmer weather.

Naples was beautiful with the early oranges and the trip to Pompeii was taken on a pleasant morning. But the guide who showed us round, was dull, mechanical; and he

THE WAY OUT

was always hustling us on with the threat that we may miss the boat. Much of what we have heard of Pompeii has, or ought to be, discarded in the light of new evidence. It seems fairly certain by now that the inhabitants were not taken by surprise by the volcanic eruption and that their most valuable possessions had been removed from Pompeii. It has even been suggested that the popularity of Pompeii had waned some years before the destruction of the town. Even so, however, the temples and the houses, the small and narrow streets, the wine-shops, were reminders of a time when Pompeii too throbbed with life. As a suburban resort Pompeii represents life among the upper middle class and the aristocracy of Ancient Rome. As far as one's imagination can reconstruct it, it was in many ways a fuller and more colourful life than it is now in an industrial age. It was fascinating even if the guide was little equipped to teach us.

There was one room into which we had to descend. The guide was explaining something with great enthusiasm. I suddenly felt the ground gently swaying under my feet. "Did they have suspension chambers then?" I asked in all innocence. It took me some time to explain what I meant and, as I was explaining, I understood the whole thing. I had not got the motion of the boat out of my feet. But it was too late. The guide hesitated, lapsed for a few seconds into Italian and then, turning to the rest of the group, started all over again from the beginning of his narration. He had lost the thread of his thought and could not pick it up from where he had left off.

There are two suggestions I would make to Neapolitan guides. They need not take their tourists to coral shops where trinkets are sold at fancy prices, for one thing. It is a waste

W E S T O F S U E Z

of valuable time and does nobody any good. Secondly, if they must keep the ladies out of certain suggestive chambers in Pompeii, they may give them something else to do to fill in the time. Two elderly American women and a young European girl nearly staged a "sit-down" strike, when they heard they would not be allowed into Pompeii's pleasure haunts.

I took up their case with the guide and actually suggested that they might be taken in after the men were shown out. Even the guide was horrified and he told me that in Italy it was impossible. As a result I was charged with the doubtful honour of explaining it all when I returned. This, I can bear witness to, is more difficult than to show the actual room. I did it as best I could and in a manner calculated to convince the women that they had really missed nothing. The men looked askance at me while I explained as generally as I could. But all things considered even they felt later that I had managed it fairly well.

We all parted company at Genoa with mixed feelings. We were on land again and that was good. But we had got used to the life at sea and leaving the ship was a bit of a wrench. Parting from one's companions was as well a matter for congratulation and for regret. One plays the fool on board as one does only at school and college and the sight of land brings on renewed seriousness and a desire to forget the week of irresponsibility.

The first Customs at Genoa, the first declaration of currency, was an experience terrifying in anticipation, trifling in reality. The Italian Customs officers were very casual with Indians. They did not even ask me to show them the money I had on me.

At Genoa I saw the cemetery, overdecorated with statuary, and the house of Columbus. I had still some hours before

THE WAY OUT

my train left for Paris, and I strolled up the Genoa streets. I walked into a shop, where someone knew English and after inquiring the price of various articles, I bought a tie. As I was going out I asked the shopkeeper why he had a weighing machine. He told me that it was for weighing wool and woollen garments—sold in Italy by the weight.

At the station I had an unpleasant surprise. A Hindu gentleman had secured the top berth in my compartment and a Parsi friend of his was doing his best to effect a transfer. As I handed in my ticket to the conductor, the Parsi gentleman from the platform asked me if my number was eleven. I replied that it was. He said, "Then get in, get in." I was rather surprised at this unexpected assistance but I concluded that it was brought on by joy at seeing a fellow Indian. My fellow traveller was in already, acute distress written on his face. Just as the train was starting the Parsi gentleman spoke through the window to my companion, "It is all right. The younger gentleman will go to the top berth." I got hold of the conductor as the train started and asked him which was my berth and he said, "That is all right. Yours is the lower one."

I was wondering what exactly was going to happen, when a young doctor whom I had met on the boat, slowly sidled up to me and started a long conversation on nothing in particular. Then he asked me if I would mind giving my berth to the old gentleman who had to wake up several times at night and would disturb me if I slept below. I decided that, however much of a brute I might feel and appear, I was not going to be wheedled into a position of gratitude for doing another man a good turn. I gently told him that I was prepared to give up my berth if he could not secure him another lower berth elsewhere, but that it would be even more inconvenient to sleep up than to be disturbed several times at night by a sick man. The first touch of Europe? Perhaps.

W E S T O F S U E Z

In the dining car I found the Englishman of the boat at my table. Though we had hardly exchanged a dozen words on board, he entered into a lively conversation about vegetarianism advising me about my trip and telling me of the peculiarities of the foreigners. He had apparently accepted me as an auxiliary Briton, as one of the Empire. His grievance against the boat service was that he had left his shoes outside in the hope that it would be polished the next morning but it had never been done. It is a trustful habit of the English which surprises me everywhere. I for one can never leave my shoes out because, in the first place, I am always afraid someone might walk off with them and secondly, I do not expect a mechanical contrivance outside every ship's cabin or even hotel room to shine my shoes. But it is possible that I have a distrustful nature.

When I got back to my compartment I found I was in sole possession. But the sick gentleman came up and told me that he had found another berth in his doctor's carriage, the doctor going up. He added with deep emotion that he knew my father very well. I shook hands warmly with him, reflecting that this probably would be the last time for some months that I would hear that subtle protest against bad conduct on my part. An Italian who came in at Turin was anxious to come to India and he gave me a long and apocryphal account of how he had made and lost money in the U. S. A.

Snow on the Alps as we passed by and a moonlit night. What more can one ask? But the morning was dull; it was raining and chill as we entered Paris. I had not expected to be met at the station and my inexperience made me confident that I could find my way to Mr. J. Mahlon Harvey's house at Rue Guy de la Brosse. Luckily my faith was not tested. Mr. Harvey was there with his little son and as I was the only Indian on the platform he picked me out easily. I had not met Mr. Harvey before and the photographs I had been shown

•

T H E W A Y O U T

of him before setting out, gave an inadequate impression of him. They had been sent to us five years back and, in spite of his hard work at the Paris centre, Mr. Harvey had put on weight. He took me to his home.

I had arrived in Europe.

CHAPTER II

SETTLING DOWN TO EUROPE

Wilfred Chew: I have a great gift for studying maps, railway guides and other schedules, and in Nanking I was able to show Sir Theo Mustard a chart showing our exact future movements—times of trains—expeditions—names of hotels—curio-shops, etcetera—foreshadowing every detail up to the last moment of the trip. Of course, it was impossible for me to anticipate the ear-ache.—*Stella Benson.*

My ten days in Paris were a holiday to me and, very often, in hurried and hectic visits through other towns, my mind has turned back to the quiet days I spent with the Harveys there. It is probably the one city where the foreigner is accepted as the usual thing. But it is also, I think, one of the great cities on which few strangers leave any impression. Certainly, it is difficult for one who knows no French to get on in Paris. My contacts were nearly all through the Harveys and, since they have a very extensive field of work, I learnt something of the life of the International group which had grown round the Quaker Centre at 12, Rue Guy de la Brosse. But I never made the effort to get in touch with social workers in that city as I have since done, in my visits to other countries.

I had not thought it was possible for any country other than India to produce a social worker of the G. K. Devadhar type. The absence of systematic work, the close attention to detail, the unsparing energy and the utter disregard of time seemed so

SETTLING DOWN TO EUROPE

characteristically Indian that I believed it was exclusively Indian. That from the United States, the land of efficiency and mass production, there should come forward one who resembled Devadhar in so many points was at 'any rate far beyond my imagination.

But Mr. Harvey proved a practical illustration of the evils of generalising where human beings are concerned. And the enthusiasm he brought to the discussion of each small point was infectious. I shall always remember the exactness with which he planned my trip through Europe—a large map spread before him, counting the cost, the strain on my energy, while I was consumed with distress at the thought of the time I was taking up in his office. Right through the Consulates, the travel agencies, Mr. Harvey saw me, and when I started from Paris, I had my journey to London through twenty-five different towns arranged, tickets and all.

Knowing my own nature I had my suspicions that the schedule would break down somewhere but for once I kept my fears to myself. As he was planning it, I could see that already he had done the journey in imagination and, what was more, he had taken me, unimaginative and matter-of-fact as I am, along with him.

Mr. Harvey assumed complete responsibility for my stay in Paris. •On the theory that my experience of Paris would not be complete without a little—just a little—knowledge of Paris nightlife, he took me to a cafe where we sat puffing away at our pipes till 12-30.

Typically Indian too is the fact that Mr. Harvey has fixed his house near his place of work, just across the street. It has its disadvantages and the Harvey household is, I am sure, acutely conscious of it. I always found a sympathetic listener in Mrs. Harvey when I said that the office of the *Indian Social*

W E S T O F S U E Z

Reformer is located in the ground-floor of the house we live in. There is always someone, on days the Quaker Centre is closed, who finds his way to Mr. Harvey's house and gets the keys off him to spend a quiet time. And Mr. Harvey never refuses because he feels that the man has come a long way.

I was happy in Paris so long as I had no appointments to keep though I cannot say that the Harvey family shared my happiness. I must have been a terrible strain on them with my irregular hours. Somehow I have never been able to keep to time in strange cities because, in the first place, I never leave enough time to get to a place and, secondly, because I am always diving down side-lanes to see what is at the other end and losing my way in trying new routes.

I had a letter for Madame Morin. She had called me over to lunch, warning me that the French took their lunch at twelve o'clock. Starting for her place with the best of intentions at 11, I reached it half an hour late. But I was told reassuringly that the Morins were used to the unpunctuality of their Indian friends. This frontal attack put me off my stride and I made amends by staying for tea, another Indian defect of not knowing when to step out. The next visit I paid was for dinner. I nearly stayed on for breakfast and, as I had not taken the latch-key, I was afraid that Mr. Harvey would be sitting up for me (and he was).

There are two things I must warn the unsuspecting Indian against in Paris : the intense interest Madame Morin has in Indian questions, combined with a good deal of knowledge which makes it difficult for the casual visitor to talk authoritatively on any subject, and Mr. Harvey's passion for getting talks on modern problems. Nothing I could say would persuade him that I was not a speaker and with rare courage, he had put me down for two. I depended on something happening to put off my talks, (an American girl in my predicament had

SETTLING DOWN TO EUROPE

won a postponement by breaking a leg). But this optimism proved unwarranted. Even the Notre-Dame towers failed me and long walks in Paris increased my appetite but handed me to my audiences befuddled and tired, but whole of limb. My performances, however, were convincing and I thought that Mr. Harvey would be discouraged from putting me down for another lecture. But he congratulated me on my sense of humour and hoped to hear some more soon !

Mr. Harvey also runs a centre for those who wish to practice English, where visitors are permitted to perform in words of one syllable to Frenchmen learning English. On the day I was there, there was also Mr. Bartholomew De Ligt who has just published a book on Non-violence. Mr. De Ligt was about the most pugnacious pacifist I have been privileged to meet. He had a scheme for sharing the world's raw materials which he bolstered up with the theory that no nation had a right to the natural wealth found within its boundaries. It was a form of Communism extended to nations and I protested on the ground that the White race could not hope to have things both ways. So long as they dominated the world, they were anxious to respect, and, more, had respected, national rights. Now fears that they would not be able to keep their predominance, was suggesting a more general and seemingly more generous policy. I had reason to say this because Mr. De Ligt had a feeling in his bones that the coloured races were on the eve of uniting to impose their yoke on the White race.

I had scarcely finished telling Mr. Ligt that his premonition was not justified by events and that I always suspected the White race of contemplating one more aggression whenever I heard this argument trotted out, when I met an Abyssinian who told me that the idea of uniting the non-whites was very much a reality. He himself,

W E S T O F S U E Z

he said, was preparing films to show in Africa the life of the European in his own continent. I remarked that personally I had grave doubts of the possibility of raising a suppressed people by running down another race.

He was too strong an individualist either to be convinced by me or to convince me. It was all I could do to explain to him that the Harveys were exceedingly casual with me when they met me a few minutes later—not because of my complexion but because I was staying with them and had only just parted from them.

In Paris for the first time I discarded the spoken word for the language of gestures and I was extremely successful. It is in some ways an advantage not to know the language; in the museums one can always get past forbidden doors or try to do it. I must have mounted many a bus going in the opposite direction to the one I wished to go, without annoying the conductor.

The Underground, of course, is foolproof and, for those who like it, a very convenient way of getting about. For my part, I have spent many a pleasant minute on the escalator but have rarely got any pleasure in riding in the tube. But I have always marvelled at the engineering skill which enables trains to run under huge buildings without bringing down the city. It is interesting to think what men a few hundred years hence will make of a modern city, if they unearthed it. Certainly the Underground will be a mystery to them, if they get as far down as that.

The open-air cafe, the large store and the Frenchman's intense interest in politics, are impressions that last long after one leaves Paris. There are more people internationally minded in Paris than in any other city except Prague. With other countries growing national-minded, Paris remains to-day

SETTLING DOWN TO EUROPE

the centre of the Western world. And it was on a Paris bus that I saw for the first and last time a woman-conductor. But what struck me most was that there is less smoking in Paris than we find in Bombay. It was a surprise to me. But that, perhaps, is because French cigarettes and French tobacco are so bad. Europe thinks suspiciously of Britain, but it respects her cigarettes. In Naples and in Genoa I was often asked by strangers who showed me the way, if I could give them an English cigarette.

Mr. Harvey was leaving for Holland on March 5, and I decided to go with him. The International Centre was just passing through a silly season and it was one way of evading further lecturing.

II. •

Holland was new to Mr. Harvey as well as to me. As the train passed into Dutch territory, we kept a sharp look-out for the windmills which relieve the flat monotony of the countryside. The houses too were something different to what we had seen so far. They were smaller and looked neater. The streets were much narrower. The Dutch are physically by no means a small people. How they thought of building on such a small scale is a marvel to me. They have made a fine art of it. Streets which seemed no broader than a writing table, carried motor traffic. In Amsterdam Jim Lieftinck who runs a Quaker hostel there, told us that he had to base his hostel on a one-room one-student basis because the Dutch like to be by themselves. Probably that also explains the style of architecture.

Another strange thing that Mr. Harvey drew my attention to, was the angle at which some of the older houses were erected. The top storey jutted out on the street forming an acute angle with the road. Mr. Lieftinck explained this on the

W E S T O F S U E Z

theory that as the doors were too small to allow furniture to be taken through them, the walls were built slanting outwards that they may not be damaged by the heavy tables and cupboards. This is probable in Holland where the windows are large, but they do not explain the same architectural peculiarity in Frankfurt in South Germany, where they are absurdly small.

We made our first halt at The Hague. Mr. Harvey was staying with the parents of a fellow-worker of his at the Paris International Centre and I was invited to dinner that night (Friday the 5th March). I am ashamed to admit that I do not know how to spell the name of my host. I had heard it often and I can pronounce it, more or less, but I had never seen it written. It was a very pleasant evening.

At dinner I was surprised to see that for the meat course a wooden slab was brought in, similar to the one used in Indian households for rolling out *chapatis* on, and the meat was placed on it. The host then cut large slices out of it with a long knife, the keenness of which he tested before the light with a practised eye.

It was a neat piece of work but I am glad that I personally am not called upon to perform it. I lack the dexterity which one requires for perfection in such an art. I have in the past always explained my vegetarianism on aesthetic grounds. But anyone who can cut meat as my host at The Hague did, is an artist, and has every justification to eat what he likes. My vegetarianism is, I am afraid, just obstinacy, mental laziness and, sad to relate, fear of public opinion. On the few occasions when I have had to choose between going hungry and becoming temporarily non-vegetarian, I have not gone hungry.

What impressed me was the enormous meals the Dutch ate. At my hotel, the Pomona, on Saturday, I sat down to a break-

S E T T L I N G D O W N T O E U R O P E

fast which dismayed me. Six different kinds of bread, three different jams, butter, cheese with caraway seed, cheese without, and an egg, smiled at me from the table. I glanced round. Was all this for me, I wondered ? There was no one else at the table. At the next, two Dutchmen had got on to their fourth slices of bread. I decided to maintain the reputation of my country and did likewise. I cut out lunch, tea and dinner that day.

I know now why the Dutch are such ardent pacifists. No one can fight on a full stomach though armies might march on them. I confided this to Mr. Harvey later in the day and suggested that we get out before I collapsed. He smiled and said he too felt the same way,

The Palace of Peace at The Hague is a marvellous structure, and a lasting monument to international co-operation. The Japanese room is the pride of the staff there. I saw the library and was not surprised to see the small number of books on India. Muslim law was practically unrepresented and it was not apparently realised that it was different, as practised in India, to the forms seen in the purely Islamic countries. Outside in the gardens the snow lay thick around the palace. There was an irony in our visit to the Peace Palace. Twenty-five years after the completion of the building, all that we could say was that there were more peace-minded people in the world to-day.

A curious feature at The Hague intrigued us and we were anxious to find an explanation for it. Amsterdam is the Dutch capital as we have all been taught in school. Why then was The Hague the seat of Government ? The legislature, the High Court and the Secretariat were all at The Hague. The explanations we received from the Dutch were by no means satisfactory and, when we persisted in our inquiry, we gained the reputation of being obtuse and persistent in our silly questionings.

W E S T O F S U E Z

The first theory maintained that The Hague was the seat of the old Dutch nobles. But this did not explain why Amsterdam is the capital. The second that Amsterdam was the place where the Kings and Queens were traditionally crowned, and, therefore, the capital. And this did not explain why the Government offices were located at The Hague.

A sign of civilisation throughout the Western world is the general reluctance to talk about, and even more to show you, the weapons of torture employed in an earlier age. An improvement to be sure, but, probably, a reason why museums are not so well attended. The only man who was frank enough to confess his preference for swords at a museum was a young Indian, and the beard had not started to grow on his chin. We passed by a museum where the old weapons were kept and went on to the Houses of Parliament. There is an "international gallery" in the Chamber with sketches representing different countries. Unlike our Legislative Council halls, the European ones are more artistic than comfortable. The Dutch legislature has a sensible device for members to leave their cigars out when they enter the hall (for Dutch cigars are worth preserving). There are little compartments, pigeon-holes, in which each member has a place assigned for his cigar. It was on the tip of my tongue to ask what happened if a member made off with another man's smoke but the stern eye of the guide kept me off this frivolity. Probably the Speaker has special powers to control cigar-snatchers.

Even the best of us cannot stay indefinitely at The Hague and we both decided (Mr. Harvey's work having been done) to go on to Amsterdam. At Amsterdam we made a few necessary purchases on the way to Jim Lief tinck's place. My purchase was a belt as I seemed to have lost a good deal round the waist. Every time I had a discussion I was sadly reminded

S E T T I L N G D O W N T O E U R O P E

of this need by the fact that I could not use my hands to emphasise my arguments.

Mr. Harvey and I did a little pantomime to make ourselves understood. Then we set out once more. At Jim Lieftinck's we had a warm welcome. Mr. Lieftinck gave me information on Holland which I might have missed otherwise. Dutch houses are generally built on piles driven some thirty to forty feet into the ground. The Queen's house in Amsterdam is built on 13,659 piles and, although the other places have a less secure foundation, the same method is followed throughout. This came out in a discussion on the reclamation work on the Zuyder Zee. I had remarked that it would be difficult to build on reclaimed land. Mr. Lieftinck showed how building was always "difficult" in Holland.

Besides they use the Zuyder Zee reclaimed area for agricultural purposes. In ten years, it is expected that, if the work goes on, as it has so far, they can settle an eighth of the population on the reclaimed area. We went a day later to the part already won back from the sea. It was an amazing sight to see the work now done on the "Polders" as they are called.

We returned to The Hague and the next day we parted. Mr. Harvey returned home to Paris while I went on to Germany.

CHAPTER III

NERVOUS STEPS IN NAZILAND

All mankind in peril, and from what is called civilization--the participation of all mankind in political duties.—*Henry Crabb Robinson.*

Mr. Harvey bade me a tearful farewell outside the American Express Company. I was sorry to leave him alone with my suitcase to carry back to Paris and he was, I could see, not quite sure of me. He had seen me for ten days and he felt, I think, that in Nazi Germany I could not be trusted to hold my tongue. I do not think he expected to see me again. I went over to my hotel and settled my bill and after the usual over-tipping I left for the station.

The first shock was when I was asked to pay excess, as the route I was taking was a longer one than the travel agency had allowed for. I paid I had with me a heavy suitcase, a hand-bag, a letter case, and a typewriter. Even had the suit-case been lighter, I would have required four hands to carry all of them. For reasons of economy I found it better to carry two of them myself and leave only two to the porter. For reasons of safety, I found it wiser to carry my typewriter myself. I was rather unhappy at having to pay excess. It was true that it was a small amount but the uncertainty was what worried me. But I soon had other things to think of.

A kind companion told me when to change trains. Just when I was happily settled down, the frontier station came near

N E R V O U S S T E P S I N N A Z I L A N D

and there was unusual activity among my fellow passengers. We had all to fill up declarations of foreign money. Miss Shakuntala Paranjpye had come in from Switzerland the day before I left India and she had handed me her foreign money. I had a neat packet of several foreign currencies brought home by other members of the family and kept carefully for a future occasion. I listed all of them and, after a very perfunctory examination by the officers of my luggage, I set out cheerfully for the Station office at Essen, leaving my money behind me in my overcoat but clutching my pocket-book which contained the list of moneys on me.

There were three officers and one of them knew a little English. He asked me to declare and I declared by placing my pocket-book before him. He now asked to see the money. I said that I had left all of it in the train. He looked aghast at me and then burst out laughing.

"But you must bring them," he said.

"What," I inquired anxiously, "if the train leaves while you are talking to me?"

He laughed and assured me that it could not. I strolled to my compartment and fetched my coat out. I had seven different currencies on me and each occupied a nice corner in seven different pockets. (Some Dutch money had slipped through a hole in one pocket down to the lining. But I knew nothing of that. The hole was caused by a burning pipe which I had stuck into my pocket before attending a Quaker silence meeting at the Paris Centre.)

A letter of credit which I had on a London travel agency caused some trouble. I had drawn the greater part of it out for my round ticket, and it took me some time to convince the officials that I had much less than what was marked on the face of the letter.

W E S T O F S U E Z

"Do you know English?" one of them asked me and added, "the evidence is contradictory."

"I did not know I was giving evidence," I said but realised at once that that was no way to get through the Customs. So I turned to him and asked him if he knew English.

"Of course," he replied indignantly.

"Do you know a letter of credit?" I went on innocently.
"Certainly."

"Then," I said meekly, "please read this," as I turned over to the page with the withdrawals on it.

"Ah," said my Customs interrogator, "why did you not say so before?"

He corrected my form. This was the only time when my declaration of money was written out in Germany by an official. I felt that I could have done it better myself. After the officer had counted the coins and ticked them off, he said I could go.

The two others stepped up with a box which they rattled before me and asked for a donation for the German poor. I said the Indian poor were poorer than the German poor but slipped two Dutch coins into the box. That won them over. In a few minutes I was holding my overcoat pockets out to them while they returned my money to the respective pockets. (Now three Swiss francs slipped into the lining). Then they stepped back and saluted Naziwise. I promptly responded but dropped my passport which was under my right arm. It was retrieved. Seeing my incompetence, an officer took me to the train and put me in. As we walked down the platform there were curious eyes at every carriage window. I found out later that my encounter with the officials had delayed the train by fifteen minutes. I assured one sympathetic face that it was all right. But he understood only German and so he missed that assurance.

NERVOUS STEPS IN NAZILAND

All was quiet then till 11 at night when we reached Dusseldorf. I had to pick a hotel and I looked up at the hoardings and saw a notice that Hotel — gave you bed and breakfast for four marks and that English was spoken. So I gave my porter the name and we set out. Unfortunately the hotel manager said he was full up. My porter, a resourceful man who spoke something like English, said that he knew a better hotel. We stepped across the road to the Zum Klausner. I fixed up a room at six marks with bath and all and, after ascertaining from my night porter that there were no Jewish persecutions about, and that in any case only "a fool" would mistake me for a Jew, I walked out.

There was a park which I had been told at the hotel I must see; and I went there. I went higher up and came to the Rhine. I looked at my time, it was one o'clock. So I turned back and promptly lost my way. There was no one about. I stood in front of a huge edifice and hoped for the best. A late cinema-goer, returning home probably, passed by. I asked him for the Dusseldorf Bahnhof and learnt there were several. So I asked for the "haupt bahnhof" or main station.

"Sir, do you speak English?"

I admitted that I did and he told me in a few minutes the most precise direction through four different turnings that I have ever had given to me.

Now that difficulty was through. I saw my opportunity. I asked my victim what building was before us.

"The Planetarium."

"And that?"

"The Social Museum."

"And this one?"

W E S T O F S U E Z

This was really too much for him. He eyed me suspiciously ; then he laughed.

"And so," he said, "you have lost your way ?"

"But," I protested, "now that you have told me, I am all right."

"It is time," he replied with a laugh, "that you started back to your station. That, however, is the Court of Justice."

I was back at my hotel by two. I was up the next morning before six. I was warned by a gentleman at the table next to mine at breakfast not to buy anything from Jewish shops. Foreigners, he said, were apt to think that because a few Jews had been cleared out, the country was now filled with good people. That he assured me was not the case. I asked him how a Jew was different to him or to me. He eyed me for a minute and then, reassured by the blank look on my face, explained the position.

"You see," he said, "we both belong to the Indo-Germanic race and we have the same type of head."

I looked at his head. It was a perfect Prussian military type with the back in line with his neck.

"Surely not," I protested. "I cannot see my own head but it looks different, I am sure."

"The difference," he reassured me, "is superficial. But the Jewish head is quite different."

When we parted we were each still unconvinced of the other's theories.

I visited the Planetarium but it was not functioning. It was a magnificent structure, modern like most of the architecture in Dusseldorf. I was advised to see the Sociological and Economic Museum in Dusseldorf and I dutifully went to it. There were charts showing the racial distribution of the popula-

NERVOUS STEPS IN NAZILAND

tion and ingenious contrivances demonstrating Russia's failure to keep pace with modern civilisation. Railways, I was solemnly assured by an attendant, were best in Belgium, the next best system being German, then English; last of a long list was Russia.

Then the woman turned to me and said, "Now let us see your country." I was not very anxious to see this. But she persevered and announced that Asia had only an index figure of '002 or something. Then she smiled weakly and added "but, of course, you are improving." "Do not," I assured her, "let that worry you."

The next department had an ingenious device; by turning a handle you set various figures moving on tiers in front of you. There were little replicas of a man on foot, a man on a cycle, a man on a car, a train, a steamship and an aeroplane. For every hour you were shown how far a man would go on foot and how far he could go in each of the other methods of locomotion. At the end of six hours or something like that, the man on foot reached a dead stop very near the starting point at a spot marked 20 or so, and I was told that he could go no more that day as he was tired and needed rest. All the other figures behaved similarly, each gaining a few more hours over the slower method. It was all very interesting but I felt that I was just a little too old for this kind of entertainment.

I left feeling that what was an enormous force for educating the people, was being misapplied on race and nation theories.

I went back to my Hotel, packed and left for the next station. I have a real feeling for Dusseldorf, for it was the one place where I met a really dishonest porter. I was probably cheated in other places as well, but never so blatantly as at Dusseldorf. After I paid my bill, I asked for my things to be put on the station across the road and I asked the porter how

W E S T O F S U E Z

much that would be. He solemnly assured me, "Two marks for your four items, Sir."

"Surely," I said, "that is rather high."

No, it was if anything low. I paid like a man or a fool, much the same thing.

When I got down at Hanover, my next stop, I decided that I would waste no money here. I picked up my bags and marched with them or struggled, it depends on how you look at it, to the cloak-room. Here, I made a mistake. I had a German-English and *vice-versa* booklet that told me all I need know. There was a sentence in it which told you how to say, "take me to the luggage office quickly."

I did not want to say, "quickly" to the porter to whom, after all, I was not giving my things to carry, but after quick research I found that the word corresponding to luggage office was "gepack ausgabe." I uttered it first slowly so that no one could hear and then, when the porter asked me to say it again, in a loud voice that shook the platform with laughter, for I had apparently said it wrong. That did not matter and the porter after frantic mimicry to show me handbags and suit-cases, took me to a window. The man there kept repeating 'karten' several times until I told him, as best I could, that I wanted to leave my things in his charge. Then he pointed to a window on the other side marked "Gepack Annahme" and I went up and gave my things in. I nearly pitched my book out of the window, but I hoped that it might yet be of use.

I had a small folder illustrating the beauties of Hanover. I wished to finish Hanover in three hours and to take a train at eight-thirty that night for Hamburg. I went out of the station intending to do Hanover by bus and tram. Outside, however, I found two taxi-drivers looking so friendly that I hailed them, got

NERVOUS STEPS IN NAZILAND

into one of their machines, sat next to the driver, and went off sight-seeing.

The driver knew no English. I knew no German. The booklet was an ornament rather than a help. How, you might well ask, did we manage? I held the map before me and as we passed each important place, I stopped him and had a good look. After the first thirty minutes my map seemed to show nothing more. But my driver was an ingenious man. He showed me in the next ten minutes the post office, the fire station and a training school for the cavalry. When he came to the fire brigade station, I thought there must be nothing left to see. So I took him by the arm and shouted loudly 'Bahnhof,' in his ears several times. He responded with an emphatic, "Jah, jah."

This went on for ten minutes until I found a way out of this deadlock. I threatened to get down at a traffic stop. That did the trick. I was back at the station in ten minutes. The meter showed 3 marks. I paid and stepped out glad to have been let off so cheap. It was, I realised, a dangerous way of seeing sights in a country when you did not know the language. I found a strange comfort by sticking my finger out of the hole in my pocket and wiggling it about. Then I got a porter and went to the "Gepack Ausgabe"—this time correctly—and asked the man how much it would be to carry them across to the train. He said, "Twenty pfennigs a bag." I handed him two—the heavier two, of course—and took the other two myself. Forty-five pfennigs found him well content.

I was on my way to Hamburg at 8-30. What was more I was a day ahead of schedule for it was only the 9th March and I was expected to leave Hanover on the 10th. Then again I had a man with me who spoke English. I asked him for a

W E S T O F S U E Z

hotel not too expensive and he recommended the Reichshof. But the Reichshof when I got to it, seemed to me the most luxurious place in Hamburg.

II.

Hamburg was from all accounts different from the rest of Germany. It had voted 95 per cent for the Nazis as against the 99 of other provinces. As a shipping centre it has more international contacts than other German towns. As a ship-building city it was prosperous in war and in peace. All this I found not on my first glance at Hamburg but before getting to the place from a couple of guide books, now lost. Hamburg, therefore, was an ideal introduction to Germany for one who was not himself a Nazi.

I had a set-back; my friend, Mr. B. C. Patel, was not to be found on the telephone directory. I am sorry I missed him because it is not improbable that I would have seen Hamburg more thoroughly. But I could not then have tramped the street for six or seven hours each day and tasted the lunches of the vegetarian restaurant on Grosse Allee.

It is a pleasure to dine in a German vegetarian restaurant and to me there was the added thrill of discovery. Hamburg had one of the best restaurants but the waiters spoke no English. I generally waited for the menu card and ordered what read most tempting. Just when something colossal and unappetising came to my table, I would find at the next one better and more wholesome fare. And even at the risk of indigestion, I made it a point to order one of that as well since I never knew when it would figure on the card again. The great advantage in the German system is that the vegetarian restaurant is non-alcoholic and non-smoking as well as vegetarian. I am myself a smoker but I dislike smoke in the dining room.

N E R V O U S S T E P S I N N A Z I L A N D

My greatest discovery by way of food was the mixed plate which brought a substantial array of vegetables of all kinds before one. The apple juice they gave at the restaurant took me time to appreciate but later there was nothing to equal it. Milk, I found to my surprise, was cheaper than tea and it was often drunk with the food as we Indians drink water or as the non-abstainer drinks wine.

I was very much impressed by the number of passers-by who seemed to delight in looking into the food-stores. In Paris it had been clothes or books that drew crowds. In Holland it had been books or clothes. But in Hamburg food seemed to be the main interest. And there was not much buying either. Men in uniform passing to and fro in the streets looked to be the only carefree persons in the crowd. Once at a cinema theatre I asked for a 90 pfennig ticket. The seller turned and said something with a smile which I did not understand. I looked round and an elderly gentleman told me with a quiet smile, "She says you must be rich to spend so much on a cinema these days." I laughed and went in. There were few in the 90 pfennigs rows, but the 70 pfennigs were full.

There seems to me to be more poverty in Hamburg, and even more suspicion, than in the other German towns I visited later on. And I have often felt that Hamburg might have been happier had it voted more Nazi than it did. It is probable that this feeling was in part due to the fact that Hamburg was the first German town I stayed in and that I had been so well indoctrinated with a fear of Nazi rule that I interpreted things in a manner not quite justified. But I do not think so.

For a seaport, Hamburg was, like Bombay, extraordinarily well-behaved. I did not realise that then. (I had seen Port Said, Genoa and Naples and I felt that it would be unfair to compare

W E S T O F S U E Z

Hamburg with them.). It looked clean because the snow lay thick on the roads and housetops. I discovered that it was easier to walk in the middle of the road than on the pavements and I naturally did so, noting with surprise that no one else had found this out. I was told later, almost on the day I left Hamburg in fact, that it is an offence to walk in the middle of the road and that a penalty, of one mark is levied on the offender.

The Hotel Reichshof was a luxury hotel and I found in the morning that my bill was almost overwhelming. I settled my account and called on a family with whom I had friends in common, with the intention of finding out cheaper lodgings. By some misunderstanding I found I had foisted myself on them before either of us could back out. My host was an Englishman who had married a German lady and I had an extremely difficult time explaining Indian ways to her.

She was telling me of the difficulties confronting her in fixing up dances and parties because there were not enough men for all the girls or not enough girls for all the men. Then she asked me, "Have you the same trouble in India?" I laughed and said that we did not dance as much in India as they did in Europe, that mostly it was the pastime of the well-to-do and that there were large sections of society which would consider it a bad, if not immoral, thing. She was taken aback and her next question put me completely out.

"But," she said, "if you young men and women do not dance what do you do when you meet?"

All my ingenious explanations failed to convince her and far into the night she kept on asking me what young men and women in India did at social functions. She concluded on a heavy note by intimating that she had not much of an opinion of people who did not relax on occasion and that there could be

NERVOUS STEPS IN NAZILAND

little fun in social functions if there was no dancing at all. I hastily assured her that we got as much fun out of life in discussing politics, the character of our neighbours, the evils of taxation, and the faults of the Government, as any other nation.

"We are backward only in the dance," I said, "and even here many of our foreign-educated young men excel."

Here her husband added a footnote more intricate than enlightening on the evils of the devadasi system with a parenthesis on the caste system and early marriage, and by the time I had extricated the tangle it was time to go to bed.

There were in Hamburg two museums—a handicrafts museum and an arts one—there was a tunnel and there was Chili House, a skyscraper amid dwarfs. I visited the museums and had long conversations with odd people with the help of my little German-English dictionary, a pencil and a piece of paper.

I was interested in three subjects—the man in the street's view on Russia, on the Jewish question, on the Spanish tangle. And I had been told before going into Germany that these were just the subjects I should not broach. I did approach them in various ways—tactfully if my informant knew English, timidly if he did not—and, I must admit, I was surprised at what I found. The average man in Hamburg is more suspicious than his counterpart elsewhere. On Spain, as far as I could make out, opinion varied between those who regarded it as the sacred mission of Germany to wipe out Communism from Europe—"after Spain, Czechoslovakia : after Czechoslovakia, France"—and others who felt that what happened in Spain was none of the German's business and that in any case German intervention would have to stop pretty soon in view of internal economic difficulties. I found more "pacifists" about than fighters.

W E S T O F S U E Z

On Russia, strange to say, there was a certain amount of fear but there was also a feeling that, as Germany was misrepresented in the British Press, so Russia might be misrepresented in the German Press. This, I must mention, was the middle opinion. There was an extremist who graphically held his nose at the mention of Communism as though it were a bad smell. But then, on the other hand, there was one daredevil who led me to a quiet, secluded corner of the Handicraft museum to tell me that Communism was good, adding with earnest anxiety that if I mentioned it outside we would both be kicked or kicked out. He had been through the War and he said he only wanted to get even with France.

The Jewish question nobody wanted to discuss apart from saying "it was necessary" and changing the subject rapidly. All the information I got was that the Jew and the German lived together more peacefully in Hamburg than in many parts of Germany, and there seemed to be many Jews about.

My host had determinedly taken up an attitude of non-intervention in German politics and he gave me to understand that I would be all right if I kept to museums, castles and monuments in Germany. He was very eager to know, however, what the Indian Congress would do and how we would cope with bribery and corruption if we took over the Government from the British. I told him that it would be difficult, particularly as there would be powerful interests waiting to point out Indian defects and incapacity to rule. I added that corruption was not altogether unknown in the old system and in any case things could not get worse. He was not quite convinced but he had a new angle to look at Indian problems from and he frankly admitted the point of my contention.

Somehow, I found the atmosphere of Hamburg oppressive and I felt that I was too much of a nuisance to my friends who

N E R V O U S S T E P S I N N A Z I L A N D

found my vegetarianism a difficult problem to tackle. So on the 12th March I left Hamburg for Copenhagen. It was a long journey but I had a lively Englishman opposite me who explained to me at great length how Britain proposed to train India and her other dependencies to be democratic instead of dictated to.

CHAPTER IV

A SCANDINAVIAN WELCOME

We human beings have no longer any reason to admire ants and bees: what they accomplish by way of co-operation, we can accomplish too. We too are without question made for a collective existence.—*Count Hermann Keyserling.*

The second and first class bogies were taken on a ferry at Warnemunde and we crossed over into Denmark. My English companion advised me to mind my head as we were run on to the ferry. As we neared Copenhagen he pointed out the huge bridge which is nearing completion—the largest in the world, he said—and told me to look carefully around me in Denmark which, to his mind, had attained to such prosperity through pursuing a peace policy. I asked him to recommend a good hotel to me and he recommended the Astoria. I am not sure if this is the right name because I did not stay in it. It adjoined the station. Its exterior looked so expensive that I decided to seek more modest lodgings at the Hotel Terminus.

But he was more interested in explaining to me European politics. He earnestly remarked that Holland was not doing so well as the Scandinavian countries because she was ruled over by a Queen. I expressed surprise at this opinion in view of the fact that the two sovereigns in English history regarded as the most successful were the two Queens; that only two other monarchs in the long line were more easily remembered but not

A SCANDINAVIAN WELCOME

so much for their success as kings as for more human qualities; and that he should not forget that Britain herself had today a princess as heir-presumptive. But he was prepared to rewrite history to prove his argument as it affected the past and frankly pessimistic regarding the future. We parted at Copenhagen, his last service to me being to call a porter to take my things.

I put my luggage in the cloak-room and strolled out in search of accommodation. I had not stepped off the station when I saw a notice across the street "Missions Hotel." Here at least, I thought there will be someone who can speak English. I went across and my heart sank when I read that the hotel was on the third floor. These things count when you have to handle your own luggage and I had still one very heavy suitcase, a type-writer, a handbag and a brief-case. Luckily I saw the Terminus Hotel was on the first floor and even more luckily there was a man there who knew a little English. I fixed up a room, asked the man to bring my things from the cloak-room and posted a letter of introduction to Mr. J. Halfden-Nielson which Mr. Harvey had given me.

After inquiring from the hotel porter which was the most interesting road, I set out for a stroll on Vesterbrogade. At Det Ny (The New) Theatre, I was attracted by a large sign advertising "10 Minuter Alibi." I did not know when it was showing and when the performance began. But I was convinced that it was a cinema show. As I paid three and a half crowns for a ticket I made a mental note of the high prices. I went up and found it was a play. The acting was remarkably good, so much so that even though I did not know the language I was able to follow the plot.

When I got back to my hotel at 11-30 that night I was told that there had been a telephone call for me from Mr. Halfden-

W E S T O F S U E Z

Nielson. Mr. Nielson asked me when I got in touch with him the next morning how long I was staying in Denmark and, when I told him I wished to leave in a couple of days, he was surprised. He was very busy, he said, but he called me to tea that afternoon (March 13) and advised me to take a particular train which he always took as it would enable him to take me to his home in Gentofte.

I had seven hours to spend before I took the train and I spent it profitably. I walked most of the time round Copenhagen and by two I had seen the main sights—the police head office, the fish market, the flower market, the churches, the outside of innumerable museums, through the parks particularly the Botanical Gardens and the Royal Gardens round Rosenborg Castle, then along the beautiful promenade Langeline, to the Mermaid statue and back by the Palace and the Stock Exchange. I was just in time to get to the station. Mr. Nielson met me and we both walked down to his home. I was introduced to Mr. Halfden-Nielson's charming family.

I asked Mr. Nielson if he knew Dr. L. P. Larsen, a Danish missionary with a long record of social work in South India, a friend of my father's. Mr. Nielson found out Dr. Larsen's telephone number from the mission organisation and rang him up for me. Mrs. Larsen who received the message, expressed surprise that I should have followed so closely on the announcement in *The Reformer* that I had left India. Dr. Larsen, she said, was out of town but he was expected back on Monday and I could see him if I went over for tea. I decided to stay on till Monday and accepted the invitation. Mrs. Larsen then gave me in detail instructions on how to get to her place. I was so confident of finding my way about in a small city like Copenhagen that I did not listen very attentively after I had learnt the number of the bus which would take me to the place.

A SCANDINAVIAN WELCOME

It was through Mr. Nielson too that I fixed up an engagement for Monday morning to visit the International High School at Helsingør, the scene of Shakespeare's Hamlet. And again it was at the Halfden-Nielsons' that I met Mr. Bernard Nielson who had translated Mahatma Gandhi's autobiography into Danish, and his wife. Mr. Bernard Nielson came in just as I was about to leave and he said if I liked he would spend a good part of Sunday showing me round. We arranged to meet on Sunday (March 14th) at Grundtvij House where the Quakers held their silence meeting. When I got back to my hotel, I could do nothing more for the day.

I set out on Sunday morning a good half hour in advance to reach Grundtvij House on Studiestraede. As I had run out of letter paper, I walked into a stationer's and asked for a packet of letter paper and one of typing paper. I was solemnly informed that I could buy as many single sheets as I liked but no packets on Sunday. At Grundtvij House, I met the Danish Quakers who seem to belong to the faith in families (which can be counted on the fingers of one hand). I was a bit of a problem to Mr. and Mrs. Bernard Nielson because I had seen the outside at any rate of most of the important sights. But they took me round to the police office, an impressive modern edifice, the Round Tower and to the Glyptothek where some fine sculptural pieces are on view.

It was at the Round Tower that we had to go up to the top, not by steps but up a gradient. Peter the Great had made history for the Round Tower by riding up to the top in his state coach when he visited Copenhagen. It was less pleasant walking up and Mrs. Nielson was very soon tired of the exercise. But once we got to the top the view was well worth the ascent. It was a day well spent and I was able to learn quite a bit about Danish politics and Danish life from my friends.

W E S T O F S U E Z

In the evening I took advantage of a little spare time to call on a journalist at the office of the *Democrat*, whom Mr. Halfden-Nielson had asked me to look up. I do not remember his name but he had written a small book on "India." I was shown into his room and learnt very soon that his book was on the Indies principally and more in the nature of a travel book. He asked me how he could help me and I was at a loss to know what to say. I remembered that Denmark had always been associated in our economics with the co-operative movement; socially with educational progress; and gastronomically with dairy produce. I left the last one out and mentioned a slight interest in the first two.

He handed me over to another journalist who asked me a few questions in a very perfunctory way (though I told him I was not worth all that trouble) and passed me on to a photographer. Both the journalists told me with a smile that my friends would be glad to see my picture. Apparently Danish journalists have less sophisticated friends than we have. But the next day as I bought a copy on my way to Helsingor, I saw my photograph and my first reaction was one of anger against Mr. Harvey. He had told me, apparently in all earnestness, that against my dark complexion an incipient beard would not show. Well, shaving is at all times a nuisance. So I followed his hint religiously, as I have followed no other advice in my life. The result was that the camera which cannot lie, had presented the readers of the *Democrat* with the picture of one who looked the very incarnation of political disreputability.

The International High School at Helsingor is an interesting experiment in adult education. There were men and women from all nations and an Englishman named Lewis took me in hand. Mr. Lewis was a disillusioned man who was regaining his poise at Helsingor or so it seemed to me. He had met a

A SCANDINAVIAN WELCOME

Chinese gentleman and had shared rooms with him at the School for some time. The Chinaman had given Mr. Lewis a very high idea of Eastern courtesy. Mr. Lewis took me to his room and demonstrated.

"Will you please stand near the door?" he demanded. I stood near the door barring Mr. Lewis' entry into the room. Mr. Lewis put his hat on his head and brushed past me looking fixedly at a remote point some sixteen inches from his nose. That, he said, was the Western method. Then we took up our positions again. This time he stopped three paces from me, took off his hat and bowed; drew level with me, took off his hat again and bowed again; then he gently went past me, turned and took off his hat and bowed again. That, he said, was the Oriental way.

I requested him to believe me that all Orientals were not like that and that politeness was not a matter of hemispheres but rather of individual training. He did not like to give up his illusion. It was rather pathetic because he himself was the soul of courtesy. He took me round the school and gave me moral support at the inevitable lecture. My talk which had a dignified beginning, soon developed into a quarrel between Mr. Lewis and two women in the school. The women asked me about Indian women and then told me their "information" was that Indian women had a pretty bad time of it and moved in a state of perpetual terror and subjection while Western women were free.

I suggested that, as they knew so much about it, they might take my place and tell us some more, that I did not see how the freedom of the West had brought any advantage to the middle-class woman who faced very much the same problems as her sister in India. And I added that from what I saw in women's magazines in Europe, there seemed to be some force

WEST OF SUEZ

in the German contention that University education was not much good to them. But I was there to learn and not to teach and, if they could solve these problems for me, I would be grateful. In their anxiety to teach me the "right doctrine," the two ladies and Mr. Lewis began a fight which nearly lost me my train. I had just time to propose a vote of thanks to these three speakers before one was passed for me. I was rather taken aback by a young Dane walking up to me after we had been introduced, to present me with an essay he had written on Old Age Pensions.

At the School there is a combination of intellectual and manual training and a real feeling of fellowship exists between the students and the teachers. They have extensive grounds where they grow their own vegetables. I felt, when Mr. Lewis saw me off at the station that afternoon, for the first time the disadvantage of paying flying visits to places of interest.

I was surprised to see how resignedly the Danes took their politics. The Danish Premier had just made a speech that week saying Denmark was not going to be the watchdog for other nations and practically repudiating the policy of co-operating with other Scandinavian countries in arming. This was welcomed by the Quakers as a decision for peace. Others, on the other hand, thought it was a diplomatic statement which was not to be taken as a statement of policy. But neither seemed particularly worried about it. One or two people whom I met casually, were afraid of Nazi aggression but not seriously. "If it is to the interest of both parties that we remain neutral, then we shall survive the next war as we did the last," said one Dane. "Internationally, however, we depend greatly on Britain to whom we sell butter and cheese." But the discussion seemed academic for most persons even in March 1937.

At the Larsens that evening I said good-bye to Denmark. But getting there was no easy task. I boarded a bus and took a

A SCANDINAVIAN WELCOME

ticket, only to find after a full hour that I was driving in the opposite direction. But the conductor told me that as we had reached the terminus he would be going back to Tuborg and that I could not do better than wait 'in the bus. I was, therefore, two hours late for my appointment but I made up for it (or made matters worse) by staying on to dinner. Mr. Larsen was looking much fitter, I was glad to note, than he had done ten years back in Madras.

I returned to my hotel and arranged to leave for Stockholm early in the morning. I had put an ankle out slightly and was feeling feverish that night but I decided to move on the ground that it did not matter very much in which of two strange cities I fell ill. It was a surprise to me at four in the morning to find that I was locked in because the key which had worked the night before, refused to respond now. The attendant had no duplicate. I waited till there was just a bare ten minutes for my train before turning my mind to this problem again. When I had dressed up and got everything ready to leave, I called the attendant again and told him to go out on the road below my window. I threw my key out to him and he was able to open it from the outside. With just three minutes to go I dashed on to the platform and in to my train.

II.

It is not everyone who can maintain a good temper in the morning. As I set about the task of choosing a good seat in the train at Copenhagen, I noticed a couple a little lower down the corridor of the train who seemed to have got entangled with my handbag: The gentleman had just raised his foot to place a gentle admonition on the side of the offending bag when I thought it was time to intervene. So, confident he would not understand a word, I went up and apologised, picked up my belongings and moved on. Just as I got into my seat I

W E S T O F S U E Z

looked up and saw the two in the corner opposite, the gentleman refusing to be comforted. I overheard something which sounded like, "what the hell is the use of being sorry, when you should have been careful where you put the bag ?"

I had three alternatives : To ignore it as a remark not addressed to me; to explain the misplacement of the bag as the negligence of the hotel porter (and it was that); or to try the soft answer that turneth away wrath. I said, "I am sorry but I did not catch what you said." More explosions, incoherent sounds and a heavy frown from the gentleman. Then his wife (at least so I thought she was) turned to me and said, "Oh nothing. He only wished you good morning." I promptly removed my hat, returned the greeting and settled down wrapped in my overcoat. He was still aggrieved.

This time we had to step out into the ferry and when we came out at the other end, Malmo, I was last as usual at the Customs barrier. When you do not know the language, never hurry or lose your temper, let the officials do their worst and you will do well. Answer all questions with a bland smile and keep your keys ready. I learnt this wisdom from a Japanese companion early in my travels and I pass it on as a good thing. When at last I got to the train, the gentleman who knew my handbag before he knew me, scowled out of his window and told his companion, "Always the last." He seemed to think that I had held up the train. Apart from the language clue, his apparent disgust at travelling in a foreign land and his strong silence marked his nationality clearly.

I took a seat in a smoker and distributed my luggage round the place. The Swedish train I had boarded had luxury coaches with panelled sides and comfortable seats. I woke up at a wayside station to find three women looking for the best seats in the corridor carriage by the method of

A SCANDINAVIAN WELCOME

trial and error. Finally they came to my section and asked me, in Swedish first and English later, if the seats opposite and the one by my side were unoccupied. I said that they were free, and they settled down to a long and uninterrupted chatter on, presumably, the price of furs and what not which gave me an opportunity of listening to the language.

I wanted to smoke and as the women around me looked old enough to be disturbed by cigar smoke puffed about them, I asked if they had any objection. The lady next to me, looked up at the smoking notice and said grimly, "We would not have sat next to you here, if we minded your smoking." This I took to be the necessary permission, thanked her and almost drove them out of their seats with Brazil smoke.

Stockholm at last and once more the trouble of picking out a hotel. I put my things in the cloak-room and set out looking for a place. At the Hotel Turisten, a little distance away from the station, I stopped, asked for a room and got it.

The next thing was to get my letters which had been redirected to Miss Greta Stendahl, a Swedish Quaker, to whom I had a letter from Mr. Harvey. With a, to me, unusual degree of foresight and method, I had written to Miss Stendahl days before informing her of my proposed entry into Stockholm on the morning of the 16th. I put several people out by this attempt to be other than myself. I never repeated the experiment. I reached Stockholm in the evening. Miss Stendahl told me that my letters had been taken to the station by a young friend of hers, Mr. Eric Thungvist, in the morning and that he was expected again that evening. Mr. Thungvist took me in hand completely when he came and I could have had no better introduction to Swedish life.

Mr. Thungvist was a teacher in a school in Stockholm and he was anxious to take me over the school. I went with

W E S T O F S U E Z

him and was really impressed by the many-sided activities of the institution. Physical instruction, technical training and general education had been provided for and special arrangements had been made for the more delicate scholars. In the carpentry and metal work sections, he showed me the work of the young students themselves, little trays, mantlepiece decorations and so on; things small in themselves but useful in bringing to the children the joy of creation. I paid a visit before I left to Borkagorden, an institution which looks after students from their infancy onwards. It was to my mind much more than an educational institution. It seemed to me a centre of activity for the little community that had grown up round it. A visit to the school of Social Studies helped to complete my picture of educational progress in Stockholm. Here I was more comfortable because I could point to parallel institutions in India though on a smaller scale.

The peak of my stay was my visit to the Co-operative Institute in Stockholm. Miss Stendahl had informed me that Miss Dingman of U. S. A. was in Stockholm and that she was doing the Co-operative Societies the next day. She said that, if Miss Dingman did not object, I could join her in visiting the Institute on the 17th. Miss Dingman did not object. On the morning of the 17th Mr. Stahare of the Institute picked me up and took me along.

Mr. Stahare gave us a fund of information on the working of the Co-operative system. A third of the population is in the Co-operative Movement. Educative propaganda is carried on as intensively for the movement in Sweden as Nazi propaganda in Germany and Communist propaganda by the Soviet, but not by the State. Sweden seemed to me to be a striking refutation of the theory that progress is necessarily slow under democracy. Free medical aid and better living conditions for workers, a forty-eight hour week with ten working-day

A SCANDINAVIAN WELCOME

holidays in the year, education in a special school in a suburb of Stockholm between October and April for short periods of a month for the workers and correspondence courses, and group movements within the societies to study Co-operation—these were the gains that the workers in the movement had won in recent years. There were twelve large factories—electric bulbs, bread, and textile mills, meat and rubber shoes, etc., etc., and 200 small companies each with a small factory. There were 4,000 retail shops for selling articles to the public. A fourth of the sales of these shops were the produce of the societies. The rest was bought from abroad and from the farmers.

After this general introduction we were taken to the Luma Electric Works and to the great sausage factory. The romance of the Luma enterprise was more thrilling than any novel could be. Mr. Stahare told us of the continuous attempt to reduce the price of bulbs which ended in the establishment of this large factory. As we were taken through department after department of the factory, we were surprised at the cleanliness of the working conditions. This was even more striking in the sausage factory where the nature of the article makes cleanliness even more difficult. Mr. Stahare was at great pains to explain every process to us in detail.

At the sausage factory, Miss Dingman thought my feelings as a vegetarian could not bear the strain of looking at sausages in the raw and in the various stages of finishing, but I was determined not to allow any aversion on my part to hinder our visit. We did the factory without mishap. If anything could reconcile me to a non-vegetarian life, it is that factory. We had an opportunity of seeing the lunch provided at the factory for workers which, though to me unwholesome, looked substantial. Mr. Stahare was anxious to end with a lunch in which, in contravention of all co-operative principles, he insisted on playing the host.

WEST OF SUEZ

Nor was the regular sight-seeing neglected. Mr. Thungvist had a passion for walking. Stockholm's speciality is a centre of the city where roads to different parts of the city run one on top of the other. Above the stream of traffic moving to one part of the city runs another road like a bridge leading to another part. And he took me round the palace, the beautiful Town Hall and the other places of interest at a pace which often struck terror into my heart. He had translated Dr. Fisher's "Strange Little Brown Man, Gandhi" and was just at that time looking for new worlds to conquer. He remarked on the strange coincidence by which soon after his interest was awakened in India he met several Indians.

But in many ways I must have been a disappointment to him. At a heavy tea which Mrs. Thungvist had arranged at his flat at Hélènesborg Gatan, I intercepted a distress signal passing from wife to husband and I correctly interpreted it to mean disappointment at my eating capacity. This was freely admitted by them and I apologised for not living up to expectations. From my point of view it was a delightful evening.

Leaving Stockholm by train on the afternoon of the 18th, I met a passenger who was anxious to impress on me the other side of the picture. He held that the Co-operative system fell heavily on the small trader, and the middleman. But, as I pointed out to him, even a society had to be manned and the middleman was more secure as a part of an organisation than as a unit working on his own.

That Swedish, and Scandinavian, prosperity owes much to the Co-operative enterprise is true. But what is it that makes Scandinavian soil specially fertile for Co-operative ideals? It is not that the people are temperamentally more peaceful than other Europeans for the Swedes seem to have figured in almost every war that has been fought in Europe in the past.

A SCANDINAVIAN WELCOME

Nor is there any ground for supposing that the Scandinavian, unlike the rest of humanity, is not anxious to make more money for himself. The only explanation I could think of was that, so far as I could make out in my week's stay in Denmark and in Sweden, differences in wealth among the people were not considerable and the feeling of unity was therefore great. Going beyond this, I felt that the reason for this was that Scandinavia was late in the scramble for empire, did not even start at all in fact. This has been a great advantage since the rich colonist who retires to a life of ease in his own country, is the greatest disturber of social life. It is possible that this is a conclusion unwarranted by facts and that someone who has studied the peoples of Europe more thoroughly, will be able to prove the existence of some element in the "true Nordic" which marks him out from the rest. But it would be a hard task for him to persuade the Scandinavians. If there is one thing that strikes the visitor, more than the absence of the street-soliciting so common in other parts of Europe, it is the freedom from race prejudice.

When I look back on my short stay in the northern countries, my one regret is that I did not visit them later in my travels when my actions were less affected by the exigencies of a programme.

CHAPTER V

ONE HALF BERLIN

Those who talk too much about race no longer have it in them. What is needed is not a pure race, but a strong one, which has a nation within it.....The test of race is the speed with which it can replace itself. —*Oswald Spengler.*

I reached Berlin after a night on the ferry from Trolleborg to Sassnitz, on the morning of the 19th March. My train journey was run in comfort as I had taken the precaution to register my heavy suitcase direct to Berlin. I was rather anxious about my suitcase and I took several trips to the luggage van to see if it was safe. When we reached Berlin (Stettiner Station), however, my interest died out and I let the Customs hold it for me till I had found a hotel. I saw a hotel across the road named "Hotel Stettiner Bahnhof" and it looked modest and quite attractive. For the next week I made it my centre. Readers must be sceptical of the ease with which I pick my hotels. The fact is every station has quite a few hotels surrounding it.

It is safe to choose your hotel near a railway station for two reasons: First you can get away from the city any time you like. Secondly it is easy to find your way back if you get lost. For two days I could only recognise my hotel by going to the station and looking across the road.

By the time I had settled my things in the room it was 10 o'clock and I set out for a vegetarian restaurant. One

ONE HALF BERLIN

restaurant, according to a little directory I had on food reform, ought to have been just two doors off but it had apparently disappeared. I was somewhat reassured by the sign, "Reform Haus," on a side-street. I stepped in and bought my lunch for the day—a packet of dried fruit—and then asked the man who had served me, if he knew English. He said he knew a little and that was enough for me. In twenty minutes I had revised my list of vegetarian restaurants. The one in my old directory had been shut down some years ago and the nearest was about a mile away on Friedrichstrasse. I went to the station and bought a map and thus armed set out to find the restaurant. I reached it after three-quarters of an hour, stopping at some of the shops on the way, only to find it crowded. As the waiter took some time to notice me and since I was not hungry just then, I left.

I had been told in Paris that there was a Quaker Centre at Berlin under an American Friend, Dr. Albert Martin. I went to the address given me but it was a Government building with many German names on the board outside; and I concluded that the centre had closed down. But finding a Dr. Albert Martin on the telephone, I rang him up from a tobacconist. He was not the man I wanted and he seemed not too pleased at the disturbance.

The American Express Co., to which I had to go for cashing my registered marks, was not, as it was printed on my cheque book, at 3, Unter den Linden. The street numbers had been changed recently. When I reached No. 3 I inquired and was told that it was at the other end of the street. The German Orient Association to the Director of which I had a letter from the German Consulate in Bombay, was not at 78, Ufer Gross Admiral von Koester, or anywhere in the vicinity. I tried again that evening to get into the Quaker Centre and succeeded at 6 p. m. Dr. Martin was in and I saw him for a few minutes. But I had

W E S T O F S U E Z

no letter on him, my visiting cards were exhausted, and I looked, I suppose, a fairly suspicious character.

Dr. Martin was as polite as he could be in the circumstances and he offered to give me an introduction to the German lady who ran the Archivs, a semi-official organisation for collecting statistics, who, he said, could help me better than he could. I promised to call again in two days and I left. I was fed up with Berlin that day and I was seriously thinking of leaving for Prague as soon as I decently could. The only bright spot was the vegetarian restaurant where I had my "lunch" late in the evening.

But I had to wait in Berlin for a few days because of the railway concession I had obtained on my tickets, which necessitated a minimum stay of eight days in Germany. I thought I would fill in the time by visiting the museums. I secured a guide outside Berlin Castle and he took me through the rooms occupied only twenty years ago by the German Emperor. We had to put on felt slippers over our shoes before stepping on the polished wooden floor and whilst we were doing this my guide told me a rather pretty story.

"Only a few days ago," he said, "I saw a lady with two gentlemen step into the Castle courtyard. I walked up to them and offered to show them round the Castle. The lady turned to me and said she knew the Castle better than any guide. As I looked at her wondering, I recognised her. She was the daughter of the late Emperor. With a low bow, I took leave of her."

I applauded him but expressed my doubts of the truth of the story. He was naturally affronted. As we went through room after room decorated in all the splendour of an imperial court, I would have given anything to drown the chatter of my irrepressible guide. But he seemed quite unmoved. I had

ONE HALF BERLIN

some satisfaction in refusing his offer to take me for another mark to the other rooms in the Castle. Thence to the museum where after a quick glance at the best exhibits, I dismissed my guide and wandered about by myself.

The great advantage in visiting museums in Berlin is that you can pass from one museum to another and know nothing about it. There are connecting covered passages which make it easy for one, if somewhat confusing, to spend a day of museum-visiting in spite of the weather. In fact I only knew when I came out and lost my way that I had done some five museums in as many hours.

Once I had made it clear to the guides that, even at the risk of missing something, I preferred to do the sight-seeing myself, I found that museums could be quite a treat. The Nefertiti head, the market gates of Miletus as they probably were when Paul preached there on his way to Jerusalem, the Pergamon altar and the reconstructed street of Babylon, stand out most clearly in my mind today. But museum pieces, however much you may like them, do not lend themselves to description.

My visit to the museums was only partly and indirectly educational. I was primarily there to while away the time and I had no compunction in concentrating on any particular item that took my fancy and ignoring the rest even though they were things "I must see". This is by far the best way to do the sights and the museums. But I have always had a profound admiration for tourists who are determined to see everything that is to be seen and place themselves unreservedly in the hands of Messrs. Cook and Sons' licensed guides. I have had few guides in my trip and I have disgusted nearly all of them by asking questions which were out of the guides' way. It is easier to get rid of them then. The conscientious tourist, like the bargain-hunter,

W E S T O F S U E Z

is always at the mercy of every acquaintance who has gone one better than he has.

I looked up Dr. Martin on Sunday morning well armed with a letter—from Mr. Harvey, of course. That made all the difference. The Quakers, or as they are more often referred to “the Friends,” mistook me for one of them at first. Anxious not to sail under false colours, I hastily cleared this misunderstanding and was promptly told I was then “a Friend of the Friends”—in short, an associate member of the Society. I joined the group at a picnic that Sunday and made my first acquaintances with sauerkraut, a dish of pickled cabbage which is very good, they say, for one’s insides. In reply to a solicitous inquiry I was polite enough to say I liked it and I was nearly given a second helping. Only those who have tasted it can know what this means—to a newcomer. There was a young man who took me in hand later and I had the pleasure of accompanying him to the home of another Friend, where we were entertained to an impromptu concert. My companion was a talented man and, though he was too individualistic to keep time with the young host and hostess, there was no doubt he was the life and soul of the party.

Dr. Martin is the very antithesis of Mr. Harvey. He was exceedingly businesslike and kept his centre running to regular hours. He had wisely escaped “overtime” work by fixing his residence about ten miles off. On the first day I saw him, I was impressed by a remarkable resemblance to President Roosevelt whose face, or rather one expression on it, has become well-known to five continents through the press. I have never, I am afraid, quite got over my initial awe of him. But Dr. Martin could tell a story as well as any other man and he took considerable pains to put me in touch with the official organisations which I had told him I wanted to see. Mrs. Martin who was on the picnic, showed real talent for carrying on a conver-

ONE HALF BERLIN

sation with me in English and talking to her neighbour on the other side in German as we walked along.

At one point, we had got into difficulties at a cross-roads. One section favoured going down left and the other wanted to turn the other way. A protracted discussion ensued and I was rather amused at the solemnity with which this point was argued. One of the party saw the look on my face and observed, "Oh, we Germans are always like that. We spend quite a time discussing very earnestly the smallest detail." I said it suited me all right for I fancied myself at the job.

I was surprised when I left my companion that night to find that the German finds it as difficult to make up his mind as Indians are supposed to do. He was anxious to get back to his flat to give somebody his key. At the same time he had doubts of my ability to make the changes necessary to get to my hotel by the underground. After some minutes of grave anxiety he decided to leave me to my own resources as I was urging him to do. He gave me elaborate instructions which might have been more precise and simple as I found later. I had to ask my way of a fellow passenger, a young man who was studying his hand. When he saw I knew no German and as he knew no English, he decided to take me along with him. At the first change he secured a seat next to him for me and took me along by the arm. At the next he showed me the train I had to take. I thanked him and as the German word has a similar sound, he knew what I meant. The next day Dr. Martin was taking me to the Archivs.

The close of Sunday, March 21, ended the first chapter of my stay in Berlin. The next day with my visit to the Archivs, started my experience of the official side of German life. What struck me most was the cleanliness of the Berlin streets, the enforcement of traffic regulations and the general helpfulness of policemen, bus-conductors and tramway men.

W E S T O F S U E Z

In those early days, the first friendly figure was a man outside Friedrichstrasse station who urged passers-by to purchase a shaving accessory. No one seemed to heed him and I was lost in admiration of the eloquence he put into his work. He had to spend his day demonstrating the virtues of this invention and he did it by rubbing something on his chin and going through the actions of a man shaving. It was all very well when there was a crowd but it must have been hard work when he had only two before him—and one of them did not know German. But I helped him once at least to draw a crowd. The gain to me in standing by his booth was the opportunity to watch the crowds unnoticed. I was bewildered by the wealth of uniforms but the Germans had apparently got used to it and scarcely gave it a second thought. Yet I thought the uniformed Germans formed a privileged class. And the uniforms start at a very early age—about seven years.

The number of people who could speak English, surprised me. Equally surprising was the fact that at the hotel where I was staying, only one knew the language and he was difficult to get hold of. But I did not change because it was not inconvenient.

II.

It was not without a thrill that I accompanied Dr. Martin to the Archivs, on Monday the 22nd March. It was an official organisation and therefore Nazi. Of Nazi oppression I had read a good deal, heard much more. It was naturally with some interest that I kept my appointment with Dr. Martin. When he took me into the office and introduced me to one of the ladies who were in charge of it, I gave a close look and then relaxed when I saw that she did not look formidable. A few minutes later Dr. Martin left us with a promise that he would see me later. I was not so sure that with the best of intentions I could keep out

ONE HALF BERLIN

of trouble. Europeans laugh at me when I tell them all this. "Good heavens," said one German friend, "you must all be having the impression that the Nazis are all brutes and never let anyone out of their country once they get him there." "Well," I replied, "was your remark that you did not like to come to India because of the tigers which chased one up every tree and the snakes that sent one scurrying down again, any more complimentary?" But he did not seem to appreciate the fact that for the Oriental, Europe has her terrors much more renowned than ours, not the least being the change from the rule of law to personal rule just when we are trying to change over the other way.

My informant at the Archivs tried to set me at ease by asking me what she could do for me and offered to put me in touch with any organisation I was interested in. I said I had an introduction to the German-Orient Association and I had no doubt they would be able to do everything. But I would like to hear from her, I said looking down at a little pattern on the floor, how the position of women had altered under the "Third Reich." I told her that I was unable to discover how there were so many women in responsible posts although the policy of the State seemed to be to foster the domestic virtues; how women stenographers, for example, abounded in a country where women were being taught to be good wives and mothers rather than good secretaries; and how women who in the past had looked to public careers, had reconciled themselves to the new life. I said that I should also like to know what she thought the future had in store for German women. I had just quoted from Miss Wilkinson and the Open Door International to show her the angle of democratic opinion when I realised that it was time for her to do some talking.

She answered my questions at great length, telling me how a situation had arisen after the War in which German women were rather badly off. Only a few women, she argued

W E S T O F S U E Z

hotly, even in England looked to the intellectual life as a career, the vast majority wanted to get married. It was for the majority that the National Socialist State legislated. The large numbers who were married in the first two years of the Nazi regime, testified to the wisdom of the new policy.

"Many couples were anxious," she said, "to get married and took advantage of the loans and gifts given by the State. Before the Nazis came, it was an impossible situation scarcely conducive to morality. Besides, unless the women themselves approved of the policy, the political leaders could not enforce a new social system."

She felt that the position of women had improved in recent years in Germany. Apart from that, more men were being employed after women had withdrawn from offices and factories, and that had helped the whole nation. It was true, she went on, that a university career was regarded in the Third Reich as undesirable for women—and it was not encouraged. But, as most women did not wish for a university course, it was not a very great loss. If there were women still in offices where they were found useful, it only proved, she hinted, that things were not so bad as they had been made out to be abroad.

If I was anxious to see what was really happening and to learn the German educational ideal for women, she could give me a note to the German Women's Labour Service on Dorotheenstrasse and they could tell me everything.... .The Archivs, she said, was an organisation for the collection and recording of statistics for all departments. She fixed up an appointment with the women's organisation for the next day and I left with a letter from her, and a promise that she would be glad to help me in any way.

On Tuesday I went to the office of the Women's Service at 4 p. m. with some reluctance. The details of the organisation did not interest me and I was sure it would be yet another

ONE HALF BERLIN

proof of German thoroughness. But three questions had occurred to me and I thought I would put them and see the effect they produced. The first was, how far the rapid change in feminine ideals was due to the Nazi movement and how much it was the growth of a characteristically German idea. Secondly, whether the system of assistance and state support to domestic education was to be continued indefinitely, or whether the leaders looked forward to a time in the near future when women would choose the home as a vocation in preference to any other. Thirdly, why no parallel plan had been developed to teach the German male to be a good father and a good husband.

At the office I was surprised to see a number of men in brown uniforms on the ground floor. They were the Reception. They took my name and telephoned to the fourth floor to inquire if I was really expected that day and after a little while they sent me up. Here a young woman took charge of me and asked me if I minded waiting till two American girls who were to see the office, also came in. In the meantime she would explain the ideals of the movement to me. She gave me a slip of paper and asked me to preserve it as it would be difficult to get out of the building otherwise. I looked at it and all it seemed to say was that I had been to see her that day. So I asked her what it was and she smiled and said it was a guarantee that I had called on her and was not loitering about the building aimlessly. As it has always been a job for me to find the things I want when I want them in my numerous pockets, I asked her if she would not keep it for me, till it was time for me to go. She laughed and said it was quite all right and even if I lost it they would phone through to her and she could put things right. "This is done," she told me, "in all Government offices everywhere."

W E S T O F S U E Z

I told her I had a few questions to ask before the others came in. Beginning with the second question, I asked her whether she conceived of a time when the Women's Service would be wound up. She said it was hardly likely because there was always social work to be done and the organisation was not a Government one but a voluntary society. It had Nazi ideals but it had existed even before the Nazis came to power. At this stage the Americans joined us and after going through the formalities we started out on the real business of the day.

Germany, we were told, was divided into thirteen divisions, the 13 divisions into thirty-two districts, the 32 districts into over seven hundred and fifty centres of work. At the office which was the headquarters, there were several departments. Four of them dealt with administration and finance and the others with mother-craft, propaganda among women, social service and so on. This she illustrated with illuminated wall maps. In one room she showed us the work of making toys and children's clothes, in which all women were being instructed to avoid waste in the home. She was emphatically of the opinion that German women required special training to be made into good mothers and wives. "You have no idea," she said, "how ignorant they are of the most elementary things."

I had left the talking to my American companions who seemed to be half converted to the system, up to this point. But here I broke in with, "Have you ever expressed these views before a group of German married women?" She laughed. I turned to my American companions and asked them if they had not heard in their country that the German housewife had little to learn. They said reluctantly that they had. On the other hand, I added, "I have the impression that German man needs instruction in domestic duty. This may be wrong but I do

ONE HALF BERLIN

not see men wheeling perambulators in the streets here as they do in Paris and elsewhere. Now I wonder if there is any movement afoot for teaching the men all this?" Our guide said that the German men did not need instruction. I left it at that.

One could not but be impressed by the effective organisation which had touched the lives of all German women, within the past five years. Voluntary though the organisation might be, the German Women's Service owes a great deal to the State. This is recognised in a recent speech by Frau Gertrud Scholtz-Klink, leader of the movement. "Educational methods must be uniform," she said; "this uniformity could not be achieved prior to taking over of the Government by the National Socialist Party." Frau Scholtz-Klink is supreme in her movement and every important measure touching the position of women is undertaken in consultation with her. It seemed to me that the organisation was an extension of the trades union idea.

Thinking over the whole subject later on, it struck me that without the support of German women themselves, it would have been impossible to withdraw them, if they have been withdrawn, from secretarial and other work. But it was difficult to believe that women in Germany had given up office and factory work. For one thing there were so many women in the offices. Then again we were told that all the places which took in children when their mothers went out to work, were filled up. The training that the young German man receives—mostly, it seemed, marching in uniform—is not such as will fit him for secretarial duties. If inefficient young men were put in these posts, the standard would be lowered and of this there seemed no sign.

What I felt was that there had been a revolution in Nazi ideas brought on by their acceptance of administrative duties which the average German was not conscious of and which

W E S T O F S U E Z

the leaders did not admit. The Nazi party leaders are not likely to sacrifice efficiency to an abstract theory—unless it be the race theory---and they need women to run their offices and to keep their files. A change is probably taking place imperceptibly, a retreat which is secret. This is easy in the one-party government system where public discussion is unknown.

The emphasis on domestic life would naturally be welcomed in a country where the home plays a great part. For neither the cafe nor the club is a great attraction in Germany. Moreover, to the European a home is something to be achieved by personal effort. A party which sought our votes on the platform of "Better homes and more of them," would fail miserably in India. We do not want better homes. We want them as they are, the same yesterday, today and for ever. We want independence. Many of us want employment. Homes we have all got and familiarity has bred indifference. Germans as a nation have little interest in politics but they are thoroughly domesticated. After the War a home seemed particularly desirable because it was out of reach. They needed little persuasion, therefore, to accept this part of the Nazi programme.

As compensation for being deprived of the thrill of working for a living in an office, German women were made supreme in the home, the mere male relinquishing all rights to interference in this alien sphere. It has had far-reaching effects. I heard in Berlin that a magistrate, after letting off a man brought before him for drunken and disorderly behaviour, went round to his home and rebuked his wife for not making the home of the offender attractive enough to keep him off drink. This naturally implies that man is regarded as a cipher in his home.

The Nazi conception of the ideal woman, it amused me to think, approximated to the old Hebrew one, "she looketh

ONE HALF BERLIN

well to the ways of her household." When I put it to friends in Germany that it was surprising how much Hebrew influence there seemed to be in modern Germany, they urged that that was exactly why they had sent the Jews away. But even now, I persisted, the three main Nazi ideas are more Jewish than traditional German : Faith in their being "the chosen people," race purity which was a concept alien to the Teutonic mind, and the status of women. They agreed and wondered at the way in which their own ideas had sent the Jews out of Germany. I suggested that the Jews had cast their ideas off as superfluous baggage when they fled from persecution in Germany. I was rather surprised to see so much good humour in discussing something I had been expressly warned to keep off. There was, I found, a variety of views on the Jewish question—from the man who said there had never been any persecution, to the one, a rare exception, who said it was all for the best.

III.

As I stepped out of the Reception office, I thought of trying once again to get in touch with the German Orient Association. I went on to Ufer Gross Admiral von Koester. There was a steady downpour, contemptible compared to our monsoon, but enough to damp one's spirit and one's flesh. As I stood outside the row of houses reading the name-plates, an Indian gentleman hailed me and I asked him if he could help me to find the place. But he did not know it. He gave me his card, however, and his address at the Central Hotel and let me know he was a business man long resident in Berlin who could be of immense help to me. I thanked him and we parted. Then it occurred to me that I might look up the address of the Association in the telephone directory. At a public telephone booth near by, I found it out to be 26A, Potsdamer Strasse, the office having changed over, and though it was late I thought I might look in.

W E S T O F S U E Z

Dr. Schneider to whom I had a letter of introduction, was on leave for the Easter holidays. Herr Albrecht Von Koss, a German who had been in Spain for some years, was officiating for him and he received me cordially. He asked me what he could do for me and I told him what I had already done. On the table in Herr Von Koss's room there was an autographed photograph of His Highness the Maharaja of Mysore and Von Koss drew my attention to it. He said that it had been a great pleasure for the Germans to receive the Maharaja in the Olympic year. I told Von Koss that I was going out of Germany the next day but I expected to be back in April when I would like to learn something of the social work of the State. He said that he would do his best. He recommended an Indian hotel, "Hindusthan Haus", but he gave me an old address where I found no hotel.

Once more I located it from the telephone book. When I got to the place at Uhlanstrasse, I felt that, however well spoken of it might be, I had wasted my time. The signboard was lit up and that was all. I pushed my way through a door into a dark passage, stepped out again and rang the bell. The proprietor came out and told me that I was at the back entrance and that a few paces away I could have made an effective entrance. But he took me through to the dining-room, switching on a couple of lights on the way. I asked him if he had closed for the day. He had merely put the lights out, he answered, because his customers had just left after tea and the next batch would not be in for another hour.

I ordered my dinner and waited three-quarters of an hour for it. I suppose it was quite good but even I could very well have suggested improvements both in food and in service. Mr. Ghose who manages the restaurant, told me that the position of Indians was fairly satisfactory today in Germany and that in one or two cases Indians had obtained redress for insults

ONE HALF BERLIN

offered them by riotous Germans. A crowd of Indian boys — apparently students — came in and I spoke to some of them. Then I stepped out into the fresher atmosphere of the street. I might be prejudiced but I never went back again. The German vegetarian restaurants seemed to me far better.

Much more useful was Herr Von Koss's suggestion that I should not leave Berlin without a visit to Potsdam. It is the misfortune of Potsdam that it lies in close proximity to Berlin. Tourists otherwise would spend more time there. As it was we could do little besides looking into the Garrison Church, inspecting Sans-Souci and admiring the exteriors of a couple of museums, a few squares and a gilded staircase which was in some way associated with Napoleon. The mausoleum to the last Kaiserine provided an emotional outlet to some in our party.

We were a mixed group with a small but adequate representation from the United States. There was a Polish woman and a gallant Brown Shirt who held a corner-seat in the bus which she coveted. All of us used English as the common language. The Brown Shirt who was from South Germany, suddenly realised that his Polish neighbour might like the corner-seat and he surrendered it to her. "It is for the beautiful ladies," he said gallantly, "to show themselves out of the window." Neatly put, indeed. He grew friendly when he wanted to borrow a light from me. I had not spoken at all and near Potsdam they held a discussion as to who spoke the worst English. The Polish lady claimed this distinction but the Brown Shirt hotly contested the honour. While the two of them were complimenting each other on their knowledge of English, one of the Americans guessed that there was one more fellow whom they had left out. He himself had tired of holding forth to his wife, even if she did not listen very attentively to him, and he rejoiced to learn that I understood English quite well and spoke it too though not as he did.

W E S T O F S U E Z

Sans-Souci is all imperial still. The ghosts of yesterday still hold court in this great palace. But the gilt wears off on the chairs in the banqueting hall. The table was set for a reception and it required some sternness on the part of our guide to check the more enthusiastic from touching as well as seeing. As we passed from one gorgeous room to another yet more dazzling, we wondered whether it would last; whether the collections of one family would provide entertainment for generations of the common people. Our guide, discreetly questioned, emphatically declared that Germany did not want the emperors back. The Americans accepted without question the explanation that it was more important to have a leader who lived for the people than a ruler whose one aim was to add lustre to his court.

A great part of Thursday I devoted to the museums. In the evening I looked up Dr. Martin and the Quakers. I was introduced to a young American student who was anxious to come out to India. He was studying constitutions but what he wanted here in India was *shikar*. I told him that I could help him very little in that direction, if at all. He had rather an intriguing habit of confusing "labour camps" with concentration camps. But he got his own back on me by asking me if I had read "Highnee" and I was not able to recognise Heine in this disguise.

On Friday morning I left Berlin. I was under the impression that my train started from Stettiner station which was just across the road from my hotel. But I learnt from the information man at the Stettiner station that trains for Prague left from Lehrter station. I did not know myself whether I was going straight on to Prague or breaking journey at Dresden. But I hurried to the station and got my train just in time.

CHAPTER VI

A DAY IN DRESDEN

Along the banks of the fleeting world, wherever man's mind has once found rest, it has put up sign-posts of beauty.—*Rabindranath Tagore.*

The train to Prague was crowded and he who comes late to a railway station, must pay for his folly. I found an entire carriage of second class compartments comparatively empty and promptly took possession. There were two other passengers. We found that all of us spoke English of a sort and we fell to discussing life in general and train journeys in particular. I had just finished narrating how I had never been early for a train and had never suffered for it, when the serpent arrived. He was the conductor who told us most politely that we were in the Hungarian bogie, that one seat in the corner was reserved and that though the other seats were free no one could travel by it unless they had a reservation ticket.

My two companions trotted off, muttering imprecations. I entered into conversation with the conductor who told me point-blank that he wished me to get off to the other end of the train where I belonged. I said that I was only going to Dresden and that, as it was a matter of three hours, I hoped he would not object to my innocuous presence. He pricked up his ears when I mentioned Dresden and then started to lecture me as if I was trying to defraud the company. One would have thought that I was trying

W E S T O F S U E Z

to get to Budapest on a ticket to Dresden to judge from his language. I thought it best to leave him alone.

I left my luggage on the rack and went to the other end. There was not a seat free and several men and women stood in the corridor. After I had stood near the door for about fifteen minutes, the ticket inspector came and asked for my ticket which I handed over. He returned again and I was afraid that he would ask me to take my luggage out of the Budapest car; but he marched me down the corridor to a seat which he asked me to occupy. I refused it and finished my journey standing.

Before Dresden I was wrongly signalled by my neighbour, a kindly old woman, to get down and I hopped off only to find I was out at the wrong place. I scrambled in again. I had to keep a fatuous smile on my face to cheer up my informant who seemed in acute agony. At Dresden I went to the Hungarian bogie and collected my things.

I left my heavy bag and my typewriter at the cloakroom and stepped out with a handbag and a large-sized wallet of papers. The exterior of the Central Station at Dresden has a most comforting appearance, one wing of it being flanked by inquiry offices. I walked in and fixed up an evening train for continuing my journey to Prague and was surprised to see as I got out again that I was feeling much lighter—I had left my handbag behind. I retrieved it. The picture gallery was my destination and I made for it. After several false runs I reached the place. The door was closed but I tried to push in gently. A little crowd collected and I threw a general question in the air, whether any one knew English. One little boy, as I thought, stepped out and pleaded guilty in a squeaky voice. It was a young girl who was hiking through Dresden and she sympathised with me because the museum was

A DAY IN DRESDEN

closed. I told her that would mean another day in Dresden. A small man who was hanging about, offered to help me when I came again and I insincerely expressed intense gratitude. Now I was left with the job of finding a hotel for the night.

In my search for a hotel, I read on a board in a side-street the words "Zum Klausner." Struck by the fact that the hotel I had stayed in in Dusseldorf bore the same name (and though I had little reason to like the Dusseldorf place) I made for it. I was told there that it was only a restaurant and bar. I was directed across the road to a place which was a hotel. My hotel vocabulary consisted only of the word "Zimmer" repeated with varying accents. But it did noble service that day.

The place was no more than a few rooms over a bar and the Manager came forward and shot a whole lot of questions at me. That I came from Bombay was the one intelligible news he got from me ; that he would give me a room and breakfast in the morning for two and a half marks was all I learnt from him. I inspected the room. The bed was clean, the furniture of the kind one claims compensation on. I took it, put my things in and went out again. A guide-book bought at the station helped me to find my way out. I was surprised to find how soon one got to the same place in Dresden. For Dresden is a small place. After Paris and Berlin, it seemed at first sight insignificant. ~~As I got~~ to know it better, I saw it was perfect in its own way.

The best of Dresden is all concentrated in one area, luckily for the traveller. Stepping out from the Central Station and resolutely avoiding the row of inquiry offices on your right you turn to the left for a brisk stroll through the busy thoroughfare, Prager Strasse which seems to contain all the big business offices in the city, ending (to give the guide-book a pause and the tourist a resting place) at the Bismarck monument and the

WEST OF SUEZ

New Town Hall. See Strasse continues straight on from this point, ending itself in Schloss Strasse. You notice as you pass down the streets the architecture gradually changing from modern to fifteenth or sixteenth century and you realize why this long stretch of road divides into three streets. Out of Schloss Strasse you reach the most important and the most interesting part of the old town.

The Castle on your left you hardly notice for the Roman Catholic Church in front throws everything into the background. The Church is a tremendous edifice with a high tower over the main gate, and colossal figures of saints and apostles running round the flat roof. As the eye wanders idly from the Church in search of new worlds, it lights on a long line of wall on the opposite side with paintings depicting a long procession on horseback. It is the wall of the stable buildings, Dresden's lasting monument to its leaders and Princes.

An unsuccessful attempt and then by pure accident I struck upon one in Moritz Strasse. Even from the ground floor I could get the distinctive smell which marks out German vegetarian eating houses. The restaurant was an imposing establish-

A DAY IN DRESDEN

ment and pretty much the same fare was offered as I had been accustomed to in Berlin. What caught my fancy, unfortunately, was a special diet which was on the menu for a mark and a half. Without stopping to think whether it was meant for curing any special ailment, I ordered it. It was a thoroughly unsatisfactory meal, beginning with an orange and powdered almonds and ending with a cheese preparation. I caused a minor sensation by ordering a dish of curds or yoghurt to remove the void within me. Apparently the efficacy of the meal which has been evolved by the dietitian, Dr. Bircher-Benner, would be quite destroyed by curds.

I was disinclined to return to my hotel partly because Dresden was attractive and partly because my hotel was not. In my Grieben's Dresden (1930) one of the sights recommended to the tourist is the Judenhof or Jew's court. I spent two hours looking for it. In my search I saw Luther's monument and Wrba's bronze Dionysos on the ass, the Frauenkirche and the Kreuzkirche, but never a glimpse of the Jew's court. I learnt later that an unpleasant and completely futile way of spending one's time in a German city today is to look out for memorials to Jews. The court had been merged into the non-committal Neumarkt, a square which, already irregular, has after that lost all right to the name.

I had heard so much of German thoroughness that the half measures of the Nazi State in removing memorials to Jewish citizenship rather surprised me. In renaming streets and squares and in removing public monuments, the Nazis were doubtless ensuring that future generations and tourists would regard the Jews as a sort of untouchable community whose members never rose to eminence. But obviously the first step towards this should have been to remove at the same time the guide-books which drew attention to the monuments as well. Yet here were the Grieben books (and Dresden was not the only one) which

W E S T O F S U E Z

held the market, calling the reader's attention not only to Jewish memorials but also—when he saw that they were no more there—to the communalism of the Nazi State. Naturally the best Jewish propaganda would be to send the tourist into Germany with a cartload of Griebein's guides.

I was musing on this startling revelation of political incompetence. It was as though the Government in India banned Communists and Communist preaching but allowed Communist books, I thought. But, as I had no one before whom I could lay these views I felt sleepy and thought of my hotel. If it was above a bar, I argued, the sooner I went back to my room the better and now it was nearing 10-30, just the time when the votaries would collect round beer mugs. I hurried back dreading to face a tipsy innkeeper and a drunken chorus. But the people round the bar seemed to be as sober as the man in the street—to avoid misunderstanding, quite sober. I took my key and went up.

The next morning (27th March) the gallery opened at 9-30, my train for Prague left at 10-43. I was optimistic enough to hope that I could catch it in time. After all I was only keen on seeing one painting. But to get there I had to pass through several rooms and these were not exactly empty. In fact it was well near 11-30 before I came to Raphael's Sistine Madonna. In a quiet corner room of the exhibition all by itself this noble painting drew crowds and held them. I personally felt rather repelled, to be frank, by the picture of a pope and a saint kneeling on clouds at the right and left bottom corners of the huge picture. But as I stood and looked the central figures obscured everything else. It must, I believe, have been a full half-hour before I turned to watch the people in the room. There were crowds creeping in, crowds creeping out on tip-toe and not a whisper was heard in the room.

A DAY IN DRESDEN

I had wisely left this to the last. Yet it spoilt my visit to the Castle later on. The display in the jewel-room and elsewhere looked quite interesting, and I did appreciate one or two pieces; but beside Raphael's inspired moment, they looked mere costly futilities.

At lunch that afternoon, I was astonished when an old German walked up to my table, and asked me in English if I was from Mexico. I said no, but that I was from India. He apologized and told me that Mexicans had the same type of face and he had been there for fourteen years. I told him it was quite all right. It was only after he left that I began to wonder why he should have spoken to me in English of all languages if he took me for a Mexican. It obviously cannot be the Mexican language which is nearer to Spanish.

There was still half an hour and nothing new to see. I paid a hurried visit to the Gallery. The Sistine Madonna was still the centre of silent crowds. I had not realised as fully before that a painting could, as well as a poem, a song or a sculpture, convey a great thought or ideal; or that the same conception, the Madonna and Child, which had led to some banal representations, could have inspired so fine a painting.

Before entraining for Prague I took the precaution of booking my luggage through to the Masaryk station.

CHAPTER VII

BETWEEN TWO WORLDS—PRAGUE

If there is to be change, change which involves a redistribution of power and wealth in the community, and it is in the midst of precisely such change that we are living today, the maintenance of the privileges and liberties of civic life will depend in the long run upon the political restraint of citizens, upon the willingness of the supporters of the old order to yield to new concepts, upon the wisdom and restraint of the advocates of the new in stating their case.—*C. E. M. Joad.*

Crossing the Frontier between Dresden and Prague one finds all one's newspapers taken away. For what is sound politics in Germany is not so good in Czechoslovakia; what is good in Czechoslovakia is execrable in Germany. With characteristic generosity the Czechs have named their largest station after a foreigner, President Wilson. Not knowing this, I got down at the Masaryk station. Somehow I can never explain it, but even before getting into the city I felt as if I was approaching an Indian town. Probably this was because I was entering it at night and most of my journeys in India have ended at night or very early in the morning.

But the Masaryk station is more central to get off at in Prague than any other. I was making for a nearby hotel when I was told by a straggler that it was beneath my dignity to go there and that he would show me a good hotel five minutes away. I surrendered myself to him and I was taken to the Hotel Paris. Here I fixed a room for myself with a private

B E T W E E N T W O W O R L D S — P R A G U E

bath (exquisite luxury!) and set forth once again to rescue the rest of my luggage from the Customs officials. The office was closed and I was turning away when a man came up and offered to get my things out. He was a Customs man and the soul of courtesy. That little business was soon over.

At the hotel at dinner that night, the most conspicuous figure was a Salvation Army man rattling a collection box ineffectually. The waiters had no difficulty in understanding what vegetarians ate. The next day was Sunday and there was nothing to be done except the official tour round Prague. I booked a seat in the municipal bus before retiring for the night and posted a couple of letters introducing me to Prague personalities.

At breakfast the next day I had my first experience of the amenities of a good continental hotel. The hotel copy of the *Times* and the *Daily Mail* (since I knew only English) were placed before me and my news of the world outside was imbibed with my early morning coffee. I took so long over the breakfast that I nearly missed my tourist bus.

From the Powder Tower round the corner, we began our inspection of Prague. The first impression is of the copper green domes of ancient buildings, of the voice of the guide announcing historic places more quickly than the eye could take in and of the variety of languages in which the 'guiding' was done. "Here lives the latest Czech citizen," he smiled pointing to Thomas Mann's house. Mann has exchanged German nationality for Czech.

We visited a number of churches as is inevitable in any European city, gazed in gaping wonder at the clock outside the old Town Hall, which marks the hours by a march of the Apostles, went through the Castle grounds in which is the official residence of the President, and looked over the more

W E S T O F S U E Z

modern sections of the city as we drove along. The palace of Waldstein, immortalised by Schiller as Wallenstein, was an interesting museum with many Indian pieces, notably terra-cotta statuettes. Our guide pointed to us the Wall of Hunger built many centuries ago by a Bohemian king, as a measure of unemployment relief as well as a protection against the city's enemies.

But what signalises a tourist's day is not the usual visits but the unusual. On our trip that day we were rewarded with a colourful spectacle of the archbishop going to church (or out of it), while the police with growing evidence of exasperation kept the crowds back. From what I could judge, this seemed to be as rare a sight for the Czechs as it was for us. It is possible that it was in some way connected with Easter festivities.

We had with us a Canadian tourist who with the double enthusiasm of collecting postcards and taking cine-photos, drove our guide desperate. "Oh, these Americans," he would say through clenched teeth, after a protracted wait on the road. As she was a woman, none of us could say anything when she stepped up with a smile and an apology.

Another companion, a gentleman evidently using his retirement to improve his mind, was anxious to move on to the next thing. I suppose there is a period in one's life when every minute on the road is so much wasted. To him the Canadian's methods were a torture and he succeeded in rousing us all to a high pitch of anger. Yet when she came along he invariably brightened up and said we were not the least put out by her delays. I remarked once that his conduct, before and after she appeared, had no consistency at all and he asked me what else he could do. I suggested his trying a disapproving silence. He did it with an effort but it had no effect.

We ended the tour with a discussion of Indian politics, in which these two were aghast at my suggestion that a status

B E T W E E N T W O W O R L D S — P R A G U E

similar to that occupied by Canada in the Empire could only be a stepping-off place for India. I gave them the population figures for India which surprised them, and asked them what equal status could mean in an Empire in which we formed five-sixths of the people. I was amused to see that there was no denial when I remarked that Canada was only in the Empire for what she could get out of it; that the moment we in India reached that position we would have no choice—the choice would be made for us by the Empire.

One thing impressed me during the round trip. The guide seemed to skip a good three hundred years in his account of historic Prague. Prague under the Austrian regime is not even a memory today or at least it ought not to be for the tourist. The guide had been for some time in America and he spoke English not only well but with enthusiasm. He told us that as a tribute to the help received from the three countries, the three detachment of soldiers privileged to form the Guard of Honour at the Castle, wore the English, American and French uniforms. He paid me special attention because, "as a man belonging to a nation which has just gained its freedom after three hundred years," he was interested in the efforts of other subject countries. But he felt that we had had the British here too long for us to get free. When I told him that the British period was less than two-thirds of the Hapsburg ~~period~~, he was taken aback but he still had his doubts.

When I went back to my hotel for lunch, there was a telephone call waiting for me. Mr. Milos Vejchoda-Ambros of the Ministry of Physical Education, one of the two men to whom I had letters, called me over to tea at his place that evening at four. He told me that the other gentleman, Mr. Kose, was out of Prague on his Easter vacation. Mr. Ambros gave me very precise instructions on how to get to his place. It was half-an-hour's ride on the tram and Mr. Ambros

W E S T O F S U E Z

thoughtfully advised me to get his address written in Czech by the hotel porter.

The Czech alphabet is very deceptive. You think that as it is the Roman script there will be no trouble and then you find that there is. Besides, in the German-influenced States when you say "A" you are taken to mean "E" and "J" is understood as "G." I had a very cordial welcome at the Ambros' home. Mrs. Ambros is a journalist and I gathered that it was her work that had kept them from going out for their Easter. The Ambroses have a cottage in a quiet part of the city. Their eldest daughter was just the same age as Mr. Harvey's little boy, Mahlon, in Paris and the parents were eagerly inquiring after young Mahlon. As a keen physical culturist, Mr. Ambros brings his children up in the Spartan style. I was interested to learn that he had contributed a couple of articles on *Yoga* and its applicability to physical culture. Mr. Ambros explained to me the ideals of the Czech system and the main avoidance of mechanical drills and exercises.

It was with some hesitation that I accepted the invitation to stay on to dinner, partly from fear of becoming a nuisance and partly because of my vegetarianism. But, that I was assured, was no problem at all. When I left the Ambroses that night I had a programme for the next two days drawn up. Dr. Lesny who has been at Shantiniketan and is ~~coming~~ out to India on research work very soon, was giving me some time on Wednesday; Mr. Ambros himself was to give me an introduction on Tuesday to Mr. Hika of the Foreign Office; and I was to lunch on Monday at the Social Club, and do a little more sight-seeing in the afternoon.

My own business was rather an intricate one. I had applied for a Moscow visa in Paris, to be handed to me in Prague. I had to find out what had happened about it. That,

B E T W E E N T W O W O R L D S — P R A G U E

however, could only be done on a week-day and Monday was an Easter holiday. I had also to get an endorsement from the British Consulate allowing me to go to Russia.

On Monday I spent the morning at the National Museum where I was interested in a section devoted to President Masaryk with comments from newspapers of the world on the establishment of the Czech Republic with Masaryk as its first President. I just managed to lose my way into a little square which seemed to have grown overnight into a market. Pretty much the same things were sold as at an Indian fair, except that glass and ceramics predominated. I was told later that it was a sight well worth seeing and we came back here again.

At lunch, our host, Mr. Ambros, could not come but there were three of us and we had a chance to visit the Social Club which is from all appearances a national institution. I asked my companions whether it was a political club but it was not. The entrance scarcely gives an idea of the extensive premises in which the Club is housed.

The Jewish synagogue and cemetery were our next destination. The cemetery is very much crowded in and we were told that corpses lie buried here, one on the top of the other in several layers. There is a small museum attached to the cemetery which contains interesting relics. The synagogue, believed to be one of the oldest in Europe, has been in use since the 13th century. Its main interest seems to be the ingenuity with which the Jews converted a cross-formation on the ceiling of the Gothic ribs to a five point star formation. The Czechs have this to distinguish them from other Central European peoples: they have definitely left behind them the days of the ghetto.

Deciding to spend the evening at a cafe, we bought tickets to ensure admission and entered a crowded hall

W E S T O F S U E Z

where there was music that evening. I broke up the party when I refused to go to an American talkie.

II.

In Dresden I was struck by the number of little children led "on the leash" in the public parks. This is rather an interesting arrangement. Two leather straps pass over the shoulders, are joined to a belt round the waist, while a little leather "lead" keeps the child near to its mother. An ingenious yoke which gives greater freedom to mothers and dutiful fathers to chat while strolling out with the next generation. In Prague I was surprised to see the dogs, small, big or medium, all muzzled. I naturally concluded that the Czech citizens both loved and feared these domestic pets. I was not far wrong. The muzzle is to protect the stranger from a chance attack and the owner from litigation, and seems to be a necessity for every dog. It was a pitiful spectacle to see little dogs, hardly four inches from the ground, going muzzled and doleful through the Prague streets. The cautious Czech has, I understand extended this idea to the political field as well—no political party is allowed to arm, thus reducing the chances of a Fascist or Communist coup.

Mr. Hika on whom I called on Tuesday at 11 o'clock, was very much a man of the world. As compensation for a very disturbed interview, he asked me to lunch with him, brushing aside my vegetarian protest with the remark that he did not mind so long as I allowed him to eat what he liked. He put me on for a time to the editor of the *Central European Observer*, Mr. Klima. Mr. Klima seemed to be grappling with the material for the next issue of his paper which is a fortnightly. I was rather impressed by the enterprise which prompted Czechoslovakia to put out an English paper and I asked Mr. Klima whether it was a successful venture. I gathered that it was mostly for

B E T W E E N T W O W O R L D S — P R A G U E

foreign consumption and that it was helped to a certain extent by the Government.

A semi-official organ of this kind has its advantages. The world outside has an opportunity to read more or less accurate news not only of the trend of events in Czechoslovakia, but of happenings in Poland and other countries. It provides, moreover, a fresh field of co-operation for several countries and several forms of Government as well. The fact that it is published in Prague ensures its essentially democratic point of view; that it has to work with men in other Central European countries, gives its reader confidence that it will not indulge in irresponsible criticism of autocracies. But I did not envy Mr. Klima's duties.

Lunch found me once again at the Social Club which seems to be the favourite lunching-place of all Czechs (who can afford it). In a long talk I had with my host, I found another point of view to that which I had heard so far. Mr. Hika was quite confident that, whatever was wrong in the Peace Treaties, the self-determination of nations idea was a sound one. The stock argument that the small States that had grown out of the war, were not able to maintain themselves, met with short shrift at his hands. It is not these States, he said, but the old ones which had lived on the minority "nations," that had suffered and had resorted to a managed currency. The breakdown of collective security struck him as a minor tragedy. No small State need fear aggression from the great powers, at least in Europe, since it was to nobody's interest to conquer the little European countries. Germany could find no outlet for her population in Czechoslovakia. Besides the Czech districts produced very much the same things that German districts did. What advantage would Germans have in gaining fresh territory and losing in tariffs? Logically there was no answer.

But how does logic meet a situation in which Nazi Germany felt the impulse to launch a European crusade against

W E S T O F S U E Z

Bolshevism? What was there to prevent a repetition of the Franco tactics, this time in Czechoslovakia which had a strong German element within it? Three obstacles were pointed out to me. First, the fact that Nazism in Czechoslovakia would mean a great blow to the democracies of the world, greater than Nazism in Spain. Secondly, the determination of the Czech people to defend their State. And lastly, the law controlling the existence of the armed forces within the State and the German minority's attitude towards the Republic. The Germans there, from what I could gather, were staunch supporters of democracy—Mr. Hika, of course, was too diplomatic to tell me all this but there were others who felt freer to talk—they were eager to get the most from the Government but not the least anxious to unite with Nazi Germany. It was refreshing, after the placid fatalism of the Scandinavian small nations, to meet with such robust optimism in territory wedged in between Germany and Russia.

Bolshevism to the Czech is a pet snake, if a snake at all. The Communist has been allowed full freedom in Czechoslovakia but he has only been able to secure a few seats in parliament. Outside he has little influence. From all accounts he seems to be content to work within the Czech constitution. "Our Communists," a Czech friend remarked to me, "have failed as Communists because they have been good Czechs. Besides they are too gentlemanly for Communist success." This remark passed through my mind as I sat with Mr. Hika. It occurred to me that, since tolerance is the first step towards understanding, I might be able to learn something about the Russian "confessions" while I was in Prague. The drug theory which is fairly popular in England, is a joke in Prague. But the explanation given me was a curious one. It is a result of the Slav temperament, I was told, and this can be

B E T W E E N T W O W O R L D S — P . R A G U E

seen in the novels of Dostoievski and Tolstoi. The Russian criminal enjoys a full confession even more than he does the commission of a crime. In politics it was the same. Besides few political prisoners have involved others in their confessions.

I asked Mr. Hika whether he believed that men like Radek would conspire against a State they had helped to set up. He said it was quite conceivable if they felt that it would ultimately help the Communist cause. A German professor whom I met in Woodbrooke a few weeks later, gave a more plausible explanation of the sentencing to imprisonment and the execution of Soviet engineers on charges of sabotage. He said that the dangers of an autocracy were that after a while the men at the head grew old and ineffective and the system decayed. That Stalin was able to remedy this showed that he was still strong and Russia's unquestioned leader. The technicians charged with sabotage might have been guilty of no greater offence than of not keeping pace with national or party ambitions. Their removal had become necessary to make room for new men and new ideas for the industrial advance of the country. In an autocratic State the only method of removal was on political charges. This explanation does not cover cases like Radek's. I appreciated the argument though I did not like the method.

Mr. Hika advised me to see a play by Karel Chapek called 'The White Disease,' which had been running for several weeks in Prague and was likely to go round all Europe. I have tried as far as possible to see one dramatic performance at least in countries where I did not know the language. Mr. Hika sketched out a brief outline of the plot to help me to understand it.

The story was a simple one. An obscure physician discovers the cure to a disease which causes panic in a modern militaristic state. But he refuses to give the remedy unless

W E S T O F S U E Z

the nations agree to forswear war. After delivering this ultimatum he retires to 'his home and works among the poor. The world gradually changes round to his opinion and there seems a chance of the doctor effecting a double cure, when the dictator, anxious to give his people a victory, declares war on a neighbouring nation. The Marshal dictator at the moment of his popularity is stricken by the white disease, and the doctor offers to cure him if he will abandon his war project and call back his troops. Faced by a dilemma—if he dies the country must lose the war, dictators being indispensable ; if he survives as a result of the doctor's treatment, national honour must suffer a set-back — the Marshal enters on a contest with the doctor.

It is a striking testimony to Dr. Chapek's mind that the alternatives of deceiving the obstinate doctor with false promises or torturing him finds no place in the plot. Even a dictator must be first a gentleman in Czechoslovakia. The dictator at last gives in but hesitates to announce his decision for peace to the war-mad mob outside. The doctor arrives with all his medical eggs in one handbag. Like the true pacifist, he cannot hold his tongue in the hour of triumph but needs must enter into discussion with the mob on war and peace. The inevitable outbreak ends in the death of the doctor, the inevitable death of the Marshal following as a matter of course. The only happy persons are in the crowd outside who pay through long suffering, I suppose, for the wrong-headedness of its leader and the madness of an obscure physician. As a footnote to the suffering inflicted on humanity by its idealists and on the idealists by humanity, the play was a brilliant piece. The acting was forceful and natural.

I was to see Dr. Lesny on Wednesday. Dr. Lesny had asked me to telephone to him between 11 o'clock and 12 to fix an appointment at the University. I was not able to

B E T W E E N T W O W O R L D S — P R A G U E

keep to this because my visit to the Consulates had held me up. When I telephoned he had, I was told, left after waiting for me for a long time and wished me to see him at the University Library before 1 o'clock. At the Library he showed me the reading room which was an old Jesuit monastery converted to its present purpose and asked me to lunch. I was almost sure it would be the Social Club and it was.

Dr. Lesny away from his academic surroundings is exactly what one does not expect a University professor to be. When I told him that I was inclined to the view that Prague was very Indian in many ways, he agreed with me. He said he would like more of our students to go there for studies. I pointed out the language difficulty but he gave me an instance of a young Indian who was able to make himself understood and to understand the people in two months.

There is a vast difference between the Indian studying on the Continent and the Indian in London. The Continental Indian student is almost invariably a post-graduate and more earnest. One does not tackle the first obstacle of a foreign language unless one is serious. Besides he seems to be more able to identify himself with the rest of the student body. It would be a great advantage to us if some of our students could be persuaded to imitate the Chinese and Japanese students in studying on the Continent, instead of all of them making tracks for London and the English universities.

I had to leave Dr. Lesny as I had an appointment with Mr. Kose, Director of the Exports Institute, at Veletrzini Palac before 3 that evening. Mr. Kose had letters for me from India and a booklet of Railway tickets, including a whole series for Soviet Russia. I told Dr. Lesny I must leave. At 2-30 we started to say good-bye and then

W E S T O F S U E Z

Dr. Lesny asked me how I would get to the place. I said that I would take a taxi. He suggested a tram. I was afraid that I would be late for my appointment. Dr. Lesny, however, was averse to my incurring the expenses of a taxi-ride through Prague. He took me out and put me into a tram.

I was determined to get off at the next halt and enter a taxi. Dr. Lesny held the tram up while he told the conductor to get me out at the Veletrzini Palac and was at great pains in impressing on him my helplessness. I waved him good-bye and turned to wait till he was out of sight. When I tried to get out at the next halt, the conductor, smilingly but firmly, pushed me back into my seat with a string of words out of which I could only disentangle "Doktor," and with many gestures in the direction from which we had come. I resigned myself to my fate in an irritated mood.

III

"Do you speak English?"

I looked up with a start and peered round the dimly lighted tobacco shop which I had entered for a bundle of pipe-cleaners. No one, I thought, had a right to ask me this question. In Prague it was my monopoly. A little old bald-headed man stood before me, smiling encouragingly.

"Of course I do," I replied.

"Tagorah has been in this shop," he continued advancing the piece of information as a testimonial.

"Has he?" I queried, restraining an impulse to shout 'humbug.' Tagore, so far as I knew, was not one of the chosen. He did not smoke. Why then should he go into a tobacconist's shop?

"Smokes a lot, doesn't he?" I remarked casually. "No, no, no, no," shot the proprietor with astonishing rapidity. "I am Boushek. He bought Boushek combs."

B E T W E E N T W O W O R L D S — P R A G U E

Mr. Boushek ran behind the counter and fished out a large volume. Feverishly he turned the pages as though he feared I might vanish before he could prove his point. I waited patiently. At last the elusive page appeared. Rabindranath Tagore had testified that Boushek combs were excellent. A few more pages and Dr. Tagore's secretary had asked for a dozen more such combs. I asked to be shown one of these superlative combs. Mr. Boushek obliged with a knowing smile.

The Boushek comb has to be seen to be believed. It is not like other combs. After six months I am unable to say whether it is better or worse. All I know is, it is different and it is expensive. The Boushek comb has the most extraordinary teeth : they curve to the base, each alternate tooth curving concavely in opposite directions.

Mr. Boushek produced a two-volume treatise on the treatment of the hair. In an early chapter of this learned study, it was printed in black and yellow—for the pages were old with age—that Boushek's combs were the best for the hair.

"Many men come here," announced Mr. Boushek, "they all buy my combs. Women are conservative and they do not like this. They say, 'Give me the old comb.' I always reply, 'Boushek's combs are best. Try this,' madam.' They try. They write for more. See Dr. Tagorah's letter. At his lectures in Prague, Dr. Tagorah sat on the platform. Now slowly his hand brings out a comb. He combs his beard. The Czech ladies come to me for the comb Dr. Tagorah uses. I sell them many combs. When Indians come here and I meet them, at first they will not speak. Then I show Dr. Tagorah's letter. Then they are very good."

Mr. Boushek plunged into silent thought.

"Hitler," he went on seeing I was about to dive for the door, "is a great man. The Germans are very clever."

W E S T O F S U E Z

Another silence. I felt I had to say something.

"How much does a comb cost?" I asked reluctantly.

No. Mr. Boushek felt I could not afford to buy one.

"I shall make you," he said mournfully, "a special price. But you cannot pay. It costs too much."

"Oh, that is my affair," I said with a conviction I was far from feeling.

Mr. Boushek called out to the lady who had served me. She was his wife and I was introduced to her. A private needlessly animated conversation took place between the two. Then they turned to me. They had fallen out. Mrs. Boushek recommended a comb with a handle; Mr. Boushek thought I should have one without. They urged me to try both. They forced me to try both. I removed my hat reluctantly.

"Very good hair," said Mr. Boushek, "but it will go if you do not change from the bad combs to Boushek's."

"What about wire brushes?" I asked seeking approval.

"No, no, no, no," replied Boushek. "Throw them all out. They are all bad for the hair."

He turned to his book of reference. The professor had also said the same thing.

"Do you know Dr. Lesny?" asked Mr. Boushek with infinite patience while I was making up my mind between the two combs.

"Rather," I replied, "I lunched with him today."

"Ah," said Mr. Boushek, "he is a very good man. Great friend of Indians. I know him very closely. I see him every day. When Dr. Tagorah came here, Dr. Lesny asked me to recommend a good hotel."

"But," I said, "he stayed at the Paris."

B E T W E E N T W O W O R L D S — P R A G U E

"I know, I know," replied Mr. Boushek. "I sent him there. Very good hotel."

I chose my comb. It had a handle. Mrs. Boushek should know more about combs than Mr. Boushek.

"I am staying at the Paris," I said after settling my bill. Did Mr. Boushek's face fall? Not at all. He had switched on to another theme.

"Once," he told me with sorrow, "I owned this whole building. Now"—he shrugged his shoulders significantly.

I wished him good-night and left him to his memories.

I wanted to have a copy of Chapek's play, "The White Disease," and I went into a bookshop on a main street. What distinguished it from other shops was the notice outside "English spoken"; as I was looking for some one to whom I could make myself understood, I heard my neighbour say something about "Tagorah." For a minute I feared that Mr. Boushek had left his voice with me when I parted from him. The shop attendant approached me and smiled when I asked for Chapek's play. That play, he said, had not yet been translated but he showed me some others.

"Excuse me," he said after I had picked out a couple of books, "you are from India?"

"Yes," I replied.

"Is it not strange, sir," he philosophised, "that at the same time you an Indian should be buying books of Chapek, while your neighbour here, a Czech lady, seeks the works of Dr. Tagorah?"

"Yes," I said and slipped out before he could weep on my shoulder at the great thought.

W E S T O F S U E Z

"Dr. Tagorah," they told me at my hotel, "is even better known in Czechoslovakia than Mahatma Gandhi"; and they showed me his autograph on a large page in the hotel register.

That was because he was more than a name to them. He had stayed for a time in Prague. Particularly to the Hotel Paris, his name conjured up pleasant memories. "Perhaps," the porter said to me wistfully, "Mr. Gandhi too will come one day to the Hotel Paris." I suppressed a smile. There were times when the gay splendour of the Hotel and the grim solemnity of my fellow-residents made me uncomfortable. Gandhiji would have given a tough time to the rest of the folks in the Hotel.

"I hope he does," I said maliciously, "but there is not much chance."

"He is too old?" asked the porter.

"No," I said, "he preaches the simple life."

That put the lid on it. The Paris Hotel with all its ingenuity cannot cater for both Tagore and Gandhiji.

IV.

What struck me when I had time to take my admiring eyes off the sights of Prague and the simplicity of its people, was the number of Germans who strolled in and out every week-end at all times, like Indians at a music-party. As soon as they crossed the Frontier, they felt a freer air around them and dropped saluting each other with "Heil Hitler." (This salutation is extremely easy to recognise in print but when spoken it sounds like so many other things. I mistook it for quite a time for Hallelujah.)

But Prague had charms of a more practical nature. Butter, I was told, could be had very cheap in Prague and they took it into Germany where at the time it was expensive. The idea of

B E T W E E N T W O W O R L D S — P R A G U E

smuggling butter gives me a slithery feeling. But that only shows what a man can come to. One German enthusiast had arrangements for getting through a good-sized zinc case of butter.

I was astonished when he was able to calculate the weeks it would last him and his family. But I was later informed in Germany that he was pulling my leg. That also is possible. I can believe anything—if it is necessary. But he was not telling me. In fact this was translated to me by a man who was quite innocent of all humour. There were other Germans, men who had crossed the Frontier without permission escaping the vigilance of the guards, mostly Jews and Social-Democrats. These presented a grave problem to the Republic.

Passport endorsements are difficult to get from a British Consulate at all times. An endorsement for Soviet Russia or for Turkey is almost an impossibility. Hesitantly I made my way to the British Legation at Thunovska. In the waiting room there was only one other gentleman beside myself. I waited in the ante-chamber. Then I saw a gentleman step in and make for the office. He pressed a button and in response to the bell, someone opened the door. I followed him in. My request for an endorsement was apparently looked upon almost as an act of sedition. I produced a letter from the Secretary to the Bombay Government certifying that I was a good and harmless citizen and might be helped by His Majesty's representatives abroad. The rather bored individual who disturbed his exciting conversation with the typist to attend to me, shouted out to somebody else that I wanted to go to Russia and Turkey. He told someone else. Within an hour my work was finished.

Now to the Russian Legation at the other end of the town. The passport officer attended to these little matters between 9-30 and 12 o'clock, said an optimistic notice outside. I went in. There was already there a crowd of

W E S T O F S U E Z

some twenty persons. I walked up to the girl at the desk behind the usual counter which protects legation office staffs from the multitude. She looked at me inquiringly. I held my passport out and muttered, "Visa."

A gentleman there interpreted her reply to mean that the boss would come in at any time. I waited. At 12-15 I asked what had happened to the man. Nobody knew. The girl was busy with her roll-top desk, which refused to roll up. The crowd round me watched with increasing interest. At last it came open but refused to close. Suppressed amusement. I told my interpreting friend that I was in a hurry and could not wait. "Besides," I shouted, "what is the use of putting up a time if nobody keeps to it?"

He interpreted faithfully. The girl looked distressed. Then she went in and did not show herself for a few minutes. I left the Consulate partly because I had to see Dr. Lesny that day and partly because I felt that my passport visa would be all right.

At Intourist that afternoon I was told that I should have waited since the next day, Thursday, was a holiday for the Consulate. I asked the agency to take up the case and they offered to do it as a favour. The Intourist agent had a friend in the Consulate who could find out, even on a Thursday, what had happened to my visa. He reported next day that my visa had been refused. I was, if anything, relieved. Russia would have been interesting no doubt, but it would have taken up some time. Yet I felt I must make an effort. I asked the Intourist man what I had to do next.

He said, "Apply after six months."

"Apart from that?"

"You may get something done in London but we doubt it."

B E T W E E N T W O W O R L D S — P R A G U E

I asked for a letter to the effect that the passport visa had been refused, I was told that it could not be given. But if I was to claim a refund on my Intourist ticket, I urged, I must have proof that the visa was refused.

"The Russian Consulate will give you nothing in writing."

I lost my temper.

"Surely," I told the agent, "you can give me a line saying you had learnt that the visa was refused."

That he could do though he felt it was irregular, and he did.

I had to go to London to see if I could fix up a seat for the Coronation. My letters from Bombay urged me to hurry up about it, if I was really serious. Now I had an added reason, my Russian visa. I booked my seat in the train and left on Friday, April 2. It was a long journey across Europe.

C H A P T E R VIII

INDIA IN LONDON

We have heard complaints in these days about the treatment of Indian students in England and the prejudice that is supposed to exist against them. In our time there was no such feeling and no such complaint. We were welcomed wherever we went and everywhere there was a disposition to treat us with the kindness due to strangers. We were of course few in number and thrown largely in the company of Englishmen.—*Sir Surendranath Banerjea.*

Travelling through South Germany, one passes by beautiful scenery. My compartment was full of passengers glorying in the variety offered by the carriage windows. From my corner seat, I had a privileged position—except when I had to look out on my left. My fellow-travellers were very conversational, not only among themselves but even with me. As I did not understand the language, a hand would rest gently on my shoulder or knee whilst with a reassuring smile a kindly neighbour pointed to a striking sunset, a glorious waterfall, an ancient castle or a towering mountain. Occasionally the word “Wunderbar” would fall from enthusiastic lips, not mine. To all this I gave a bewildered reply.

On the opposite side three young Germans after a prolonged study of my melancholy face, exchanged excited remarks. Over the top of my “Selections from Czech Literature” behind which I had sought refuge, I saw one of them pull a long face

INDIA IN LONDON

and draw a hand down from the cheeks to a pugnacious chin. I was classed as a solemn old devil, a stick in the mud. I feared that I had fallen in their eyes for not appreciating the good things on view in Southern Germany. The fact that I had to negotiate a transfer from this carriage to a sleeping compartment worried me even more. I did this after I had made a perfect nuisance of myself to the conductor.

As I turned in for the night, I was consoled by the thought that next day I would be in London where I could speak the language and, what is more, overhear what my neighbours were saying in train or bus. At Ostende I collected a supply of English papers and put in a stock of Belgian cigars. A couple of friendly Englishmen helped me to pass the last half-hour. But the white cliffs of Dover froze them into conventional frigidity. The train from Dover to London was a crowded one and as I had missed the first connection I was in London only at five that evening.

A man from Wayfarers Travel agency, a modest little tourist firm, met me and saw me into the Abbotsford Hotel, but not before impressing on me the disadvantage of coming into England on Saturday afternoon when all the shops were closed and there was nothing to do. Somehow I did not feel particularly anxious to pick my own hotel in London. This was not entirely due to the dangers of a Coronation rush.

The dull week-end is one of the few things the stranger can share with the British. One should have thought that people who had lived in London for years, would know how to amuse themselves on Sunday and Saturday afternoons. I have not, however, met anyone who has been able to face the end of the week with equanimity.

All hotels fall into three categories : hotels for the tourists, hotels to which the middle-class provincials of the country go,

W E S T O F S U E Z

and hotels to which nobody should go unless by mistake. With true moderation my agents had chosen the middle path for me. The Abbotsford was the epitome of respectability. Here the retired civilian, the old colonel and the jaded businessman rested awhile before passing on to a life of pensioned ease in the Lake District. Symbolic of the dignified hotel in the midst of a great city was the old gentleman whom I invariably found sleeping by the fire-place, the *Times* gently throbbed on his chest.

London was not quite normal when I first went there and stayed for ten days in April. But it was much more so then than a month later when I returned to it. The buses were still running. There were no flags and streamers. Restaurants had not yet engaged extra men to cope with the rush. And last but not least, there were few outsiders in London at the time. People looked forward to a time of celebration but it had not yet begun.

"After all is said and done," said a Londoner, looking forlorn and lost on the Continent, to me, "London is always London. And there is no getting away from it." Up to a point this was true. Frankly I did not like the place. The sooty air one breathed in with every breath, the untidiness of the roads, the food—either at the Indian or the English restaurants—the begging on the streets (more indirect than direct), were all things I had grown unused to in the past two months. Had I gone from India straight to London I might have regarded that city more favourably.

The only thing which makes London an improvement on a town like Bombay, is that its citizens do not spit betel juice on the street, whatever else they may spit. As an Indian, I was frequently told, I had little right to assume airs and condemn London because my cities were worse. I pointed out that dirt was only matter in the wrong place and, what was tolerated elsewhere, was out of place in Western Europe.

INDIA IN LONDON

One cannot rationalise one's feelings. I did not like London. I was myself surprised at the vehemence of my feelings, for I liked the people and I knew more persons there before going to it than I did in any other city in Europe. I am sure the fault was mine because several friends who have been there, go occasionally into fits of disproportionate rapture over London.

My first impressions of London were probably coloured by the fact that I inadvertently stepped on some filth on a pavement. Even Prague had managed to keep its rubbish on the centre of the road. It was probably my carelessness but I learnt my lesson and for the future I looked before the next step. Saturday night there was an impromptu meeting of the local Communists on a street off Tottenham Court Road. The speaker was more enthusiastic than informed and I was lost in admiration of the patience of his listeners who heard him argue the same point six times in fifteen minutes. I do not think even the slowest audience in India would have heard him out.

There are advantages to an Indian in London apart from knowing the language. You can walk the streets without attracting attention unless you want to.

Even then, as a chance acquaintance complained, it is not always easy. The Indian community there is fairly large and has made itself felt in more ways than one. Unfortunately this has proved also a disadvantage. Owing to the gain in numbers, it has not been easy to keep up a standard. There are less Indian men in pursuit of pleasure in Continental Europe than there are in England. No Englishman will tell you, as many a European will, that he thinks well of Indians and that "your countrymen are a fine lot." And the imperial outlook is only a partial explanation of this lack of appreciation.

W E S T O F S U E Z

Did I know English? I began to doubt it. On Sunday morning I walked out on Euston Road and asked a news-vendor if he could tell where I could get a *New Statesman*. He replied that he could and told me to turn to my right and go straight ahead and then turn to the left and I would then see "Euston station" right ahead. And then? I asked.

"Why that's what you want, isn't it?" he replied amazed.

"No," I said seeing it was no use pursuing the matter; and then in a moment of inspiration, "I want the Noo Stoitesman."

With a "Why didn't you say so," he told me to go the other way and turn into a bookstall where it was probably kept. I too had to exercise a little ingenuity to find out what people said to me.

Returning to my hotel I posted letters to Mr. H. S. L. Polak and to the Rev. R. M. Gray and a letter of introduction to India Office. Owing to sheer carelessness and a misguided application of Indian analogies to English postal rates, I decided that one penny was the correct stamp for inland delivery in Britain and I consistently affixed penny stamps to my letters. I found this mistake out by accident. I was staying with a friend and it was pointed out to me that, though I had under stamped my letter, it passed through because the fact that it was typed made it look like a circular. I hope others as well got off without having to pay the penalty for my ignorance and negligence. I could, it is true, have inquired but who cares to do so when the automatic machine is ready to hand out stamps to you at every turn? There is also a certain pride in knowing the language which keeps you from admitting your strangeness in London.

Sunday I spent tramping the streets of London. Both bus and tram looked too unfriendly at first sight, for me to take advantage of them for more than short distances. The

INDIA IN LONDON

Underground was—well, underground. Monday I was a long while at my travel agency claiming refund on my unused railway coupons and arranging for an air journey to Berlin. When I went back to my hotel that night for dinner I must confess I had a weird feeling. My neighbours at the next table were discussing with unusual animation all the air accidents that had taken place in the last six months and from their talk it was obvious that I had signed my death warrant. I am not a superstitious man—even if you have heard that one before—but this was the limit.

My engagements began to get fixed. Mr. Polak had asked me to call at his office on Tuesday afternoon. And the Grays had invited me to tea on Tuesday, Wednesday, or Thursday; I chose Wednesday. India Office had given me, if I remember right, Thursday, April 8. My visit to Mr. Polak's office led to an invitation to lunch with his son on Thursday and to an engagement at Mr. Polak's home on Sunday afternoon.

Mr. Polak gave me an introduction to Mr. Browne of the East India Association whom I met at last after repeated false starts. Mr. Browne (now Sir F. H. Browne) was a very conservative gentleman who always interrupted my most ardent political dicta with the bland query, "Does your father think so too?" The first time he certainly pulled me up with these tactics. Later I was irritated enough to be rude to him and I told him that I did not know what that had to do with the argument which we two were having. Mr. Browne had been long enough in India to have acquired this typical Indian habit of regarding the family as the unit and all members as delegates for the head. I told him that and he laughed with evident glee at having got me on the raw.

II.

Both with Mr. Polak and Mr. Gray it was inevitable to a certain extent that India should form an important topic of

W E S T O F S U E Z

conversation. Mr. Gray was an old teacher of mine in Scripture. He is one of the few Englishmen whom I met, who knew India and yet were not annoyed with the Indian politician for departing from orthodox politics.

The fact that periodically I make a good listener and that Mr. Polak has known me for many years, kept me from entering into a political discussion with him when I went over to his house. Moreover, Mr. Polak is a charming conversationalist and at the time he was rather full of the subject. While we were at lunch, Mr. Polak introduced to me unleavened bread, a pleasing mean between our *chapatti* and *papad*. I remarked, partly for purposes of classification in my mind, that it was just like a *papad*, and the Polaks said that it was different. Then I said that it was difficult for me to bluff the British as I could other nations, because they knew so much, even more than I did, about India. Mr. Polak said, quite so. And he had not even a twinkle in his eye. It is on occasions like this that I wonder whether I have a sense of humour. Mr. Polak, I freely concede, probably knows much more about India than even Indians do. To me whose sole political contribution has been to extricate myself from a mass meeting on Azad Maidan, the ease with which he refers to the great ones of this country, is always a little depressing. And Mr. Polak, probably, has of late been put out by extremist Indians denying his facts and questioning his motives.

In London, too, I met Miss Agatha Harrison for whom I had acted as Bombay correspondent when ardent Congress propagandists enjoyed a well-earned rest in jail, and Miss Barr who had worked with Gandhiji for a time.

But even apart from these people, India was very much under discussion in London. I had read in Prague of the Congress decision to take office in provinces where they felt it was neces-

INDIA IN LONDON .

sary. Congressmen had refused to do so two days later on the failure of securing assurances from the Governors of constitutional rule. I was to leave for London on the 3rd April and I wondered whether England was the place for politically-minded Indians just then. But I came over nevertheless. I heard English opinion, all from genuine well-wishers of India, which gave me much to think about.

At no period in the British connection with India had there been, I think, so wide a divergence of opinion between Indian and British political thought or rather ways of thinking. The first of the public speeches delivered by Mr. Carl Heath on India was at Friends House, Euston, on Monday. He had been in India and among the Quakers in Europe he is regarded with great affection and respect.

Mr. Heath started by telling his audience of the good that British rule had done to India and the contribution towards building up national unity through railways and roads. He stressed very much the value of having a great sub-continent free from passports and currency regulations and of English being understood all over. I can understand what all this means to Englishmen. He went on to say that Britain had to help that national impulse and not hinder it. Having heard him so far, I certainly expected him to add that the new constitution had failed in regard to giving scope to that impulse but I was surprised to see that he had nothing more to say beyond deplored the manner in which the Indian princes are associated with British India. He felt in a mysterious way that an interview between Mahatma Gandhi and Lord Linlithgow would solve the whole problem and make the Reforms acceptable to Indians.

A report to this effect in the *Indian Social Reformer* called forth an angry protest from Mr. Carl Heath. Mr. Heath wrote:

W E S T O F S U E Z

"It would serve no particular purpose, nor would it convince you, if I endeavoured to explain that you had misconceived my attitude in your account of what I said at the meeting at Friends House, to which you refer.

"I want, however, to correct two things, as it is important that in regard to them, there should be no misunderstanding.

"I am wholly against the New Constitution, and wholly for the Indian demand for a Constituent Assembly. Nevertheless I am, in politics, a "realist," and believe that the Congress was right in deciding to take office in six provinces. The alternative is a straight path to revolution, which you and others may think right but I do not. I won't argue that now. The reference to the princes, was by way of showing the alliance in the New Constitution with feudal dominations which incidentally has the effect of making it impossible for the popular vote ever to rule. I should have thought that you would have agreed that this was an outstanding wrong.

"I never suggested that for the Congress leaders to meet the Viceroy 'would solve the problem and make the Reforms acceptable to Indians.' That would be absolutely absurd. What many feel is that Imperial domination has destroyed all confidence and made a working situation nearly impossible. The only way out is by personal contact and some mutual understanding. It might then become clear that, just as Indians were advancing from the early days of the Congress, so also were many of the "diabolical race"; and that there was a path of agreement to be pursued on the road to Indian freedom. You would object, not being for "understanding" which is something that must always be mutual. But that is my position and belief as Chairman of the Conciliation Group. You may reject it, but please do not misrepresent the purpose of the personal contact urged."

INDIA IN LONDON

Mr. Heath does me the honour—or injustice—of regarding me as a revolutionary. Since he wrote his letter, however, we have had the advantage of “personal contact.” I was wrong in fixing Mr. Heath’s views within the limits of a paragraph.

It was only after I had discussed the Indian situation with other Englishmen that I really understood why Mr. Carl Heath was not prepared to go the whole way with Indians in rejecting the constitution, bad though he thought it was. The position was not logical by any means. The British had argued themselves into thinking that the Indian question was finally settled for the next twenty years and that, as Lord Halifax put it in an American journal more than two years ago, the constitution would attract all parties to it by its peculiar magnetism; that even Indians loud in criticism would work it with great enthusiasm. As others more bluntly put it, the Indian opposition was bazar tactics to get more but really we were content with what had been given us. Lulled into a fool’s paradise by assurances like this from men who claimed to know their India well, the British have had a rude awakening and they are just a little fed up, not with those who misled them, but with Indians who have not acted as they were expected to do. It was very unfortunate that the Congress had further confused the issue in a manner which seemed to attempt an evasion of the limitations of the Constitution.

If the Congress had declared that it would not touch the Reforms on account of its defects, it would have had a strong case—though Englishmen would still call it sulking. If it had formed ministries and resigned on concrete issues, the English would have felt sympathy for it. But the demand for Governors’ assurances was so strange that Englishmen did not understand it at all. People interested in India thought us capable of anything after that. And they asked me to explain it.

W E S T O F S U E Z

Frankly it baffled me. It came as a definite surprise to me that Congress leaders, after their denunciations of the constitution, shquld even consider the possibility of co-operation. The *Observer* wrote that, if the Viceroy were really to explain everything to Congress leaders, they might "come to their senses." A man who was in acute distress that India had rejected a fine opportunity of ruling herself, seriously asked me whether it could be that Indians feared the day-to-day interference of Governors. I asked him if he had been in India. He said, no. I told him to come over and see things for himself.

The English reaction to the Indian situation was and is twofold. First is the feeling that the Hoare Act is a great step towards educating Indians to rule themselves and is a real measure of self-government. And underlying it is an ingrained feeling that Indians are a fussy lot and do not know a good thing when they see it, therefore do not deserve a good thing. A polite race, so long as you agreed with them, the British can easily be exasperated out of the strong silent John Bull of tradition into letting out the truth; and I have often been told, "But my dear fellow, you people must prove you can do more than just non-co-operate."

One man told me that Japan owed her position today not to her freedom from foreign domination but to the industry of her people and their national unity. And, he added, the British connection is a strong power working to place India in such a position, if only the Congress would not adopt a footling policy. He said, "Suppose Congressmen accepted offices. Worked the reforms for what they are worth. Then came to Parliament after fifteen or twenty years and said, 'Now what about it? You held back certain powers from us. We have done well. Look at our people. They are happy, prosperous, contented.

INDIA IN LONDON

Will you now give us further control?" What will Parliament do? Can it deny the Indian leaders what they ask?"

Anxious to put in a word to show the Indian attitude I said, "Just a minute. You asked a question which has not been answered. It is well that you all should know what Indians feel Parliament will do if she is asked after twenty years for further power. Her answer," I replied, "would, in the opinion of most Indians, be three more Round Table Conferences and a derelict constitution at the end." I had great hopes of the sense of humour of the English but it is not apparently very strong on Indian issues.

"Do you seriously tell me," he rejoined, "that the British people would stand for that?"

"I do not think the British people care two pins," I said; "they understand very little of political questions."

He thought me crazy and I could see that, though he agreed with me on many questions, he thought me a bit of a fool.

There seemed to be a general feeling in favour of a repetition of the Irwin-Gandhi discussions but I was told by some that the real difficulty lay in Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru being "left" and Mahatma Gandhi, "right." If we call Mahatma Gandhi, said my informer speaking gratuitously for the British Government, then Nehru will feel hurt specially as he is the official leader and Mahatma Gandhi is only the "adviser." On the other hand, if we call Nehru there will be no agreement.

When I remarked that this was an abstract dilemma which really did not exist in India, he implied that I did not know how things stood. A Gilbertian problem which amuses the British and does nobody any harm. I gave up trying to convince him and others that there is no Indian extremist who would of his own act lose the prestige which association with Gandhiji carried with it in India.

W E S T O F S U E Z

The reference to another war and to a possible passive attitude on the part of India in the event of British participation, roused in the Briton the greatest feeling of antagonism towards Indians. Mr. Srinivasa Sastri had just a few days earlier remarked that, in the event of a war, Britain would reap the fruits of her policy of ignoring Indian political opinion.

"Believe me," said an Englishman commenting on this, "Britain will enter into no war which is not for a just cause or in self-defence and then everyone here will enter into it with enthusiasm whatever they say now. But we shall not make the mistake of sending out large forces. We shall confine ourselves to the air and to the sea. And no more large drafts on India. Do not, therefore, count on that."

This was reassuring though only unofficial and from one individual. All wars are just wars. For those who enter into it, all wars are wars of self-defence. But if Mr. Sastri's declaration meets with a changed attitude towards India's contribution, it will be no small achievement. It might even prevent a war. In Paris a pacifist—a pacifist absolutist—assured me that non-abstention on India's part and a mere declaration of such non-abstention would go far to keep England out of the next war.

There was all the time a conflict in British hearts. As Coronation day approached, they felt kindly to all those who had come into their country. We were their guests and they must treat us well. But they were as angry with India and with our Congress friends as the schoolmaster is with the boy who misbehaves during Scripture class.

I called on an Englishman to whom I had a letter of introduction. When he heard I had been doing the Continent he was very anxious to know my impressions. I gave them and we were in general agreement about the European situation. In

INDIA IN LONDON

fact, we agreed so much that he spoke to me very freely. Then he said, "But tell me. What is your first feeling in these countries you have visited?"

Now I have developed an almost uncanny knack of knowing when to say the wrong thing and watching my interlocutor for his reactions. So I shot out at him: "I am glad that as a British subject, I enjoy a certain freedom which I should not have otherwise. (He smiled). That as a member of a subject nation in the Empire, I receive sympathy which gives me advantages over the full British citizen. (The smile grew broader). And I exploit both to the fullest degree. (At last, said the smile plainly, an Indian who is frank, an Indian we British can understand). But, primarily, it is a deep feeling of humiliation that I cannot speak as a representative of one free country to another." The smile went out. He looked shocked at me as though I had undressed in his presence—the look the waiter at my hotel gave me when I drew a quarter-plate to eat my dessert off, saying I had no time to wait for the right plate. I had overstepped the bounds of decency. No one in England talks of subject peoples. The relationship is slurred over. Even when we parted he was looking bewildered at me wondering probably how any decent man could talk like that.

III.

The number of Indian restaurants that spring up at every turn in London, is amazing. I had reason to thank my two years' stay in Allahabad and Lucknow when I first entered one of these restaurants. The food is North Indian but even then it does not taste the same as it does in India. It is perhaps an unpatriotic thing for an Indian to say but of the sixteen or more Indian restaurants in London, only two or three are worth a visit. Few restaurants seem to be able to survive the constant battle between white table-cloth and

W E S T O F S U E Z

curry and rice. Neither do they appreciate that the smell of food being cooked is not always a welcome one. I think it would not be a bad idea to restrict their number and improve their quality and the general standard of cleanliness. It is possible that English food is better served because the ingredients are not so messy. But then no one is compelled to open an Indian restaurant.

A talk with Sir Findlater-Stewart at India Office convinced me that there was small chance of my getting anything done with regard to my Russian passport visa. What amazed me after the talk was that I had had the temerity to broach the subject to him: in view of the general feeling that Britain is not by any means anxious to have Indians going into Soviet Russia, her interest in one particular case would at once rouse suspicion. The best thing that could happen to me, failing my being regarded as a desirable person by the Soviet State, had happened. As for the Coronation, it was doubtful whether anything could be done at that stage. As a law-abiding citizen, I was for going away from India Office without further effort but Sir Findlater (whose interest in me was largely the outcome of a letter of introduction from Dr. R. P. Paranjpye) advised me to see Mr. MacGregor who was dealing with the matter of Coronation press tickets. Mr. MacGregor was very little of the official. Long contact with the press had made him a very human figure and we found much to discuss apart from the immediate business.

But evidently Coronation tickets had passed the MacGregor stage and were now in the hands of Mr. Turner whom I was asked to see. I lost Mr. Turner's address and a reference to the telephone directory threw no light. There are many Turners. My search for his number on Fleet Street discovered an old schoolmate of mine S. P. Khambatta, whom

INDIA IN LONDON,

fifteen years had done little to change. It was an auspicious meeting for me.

Mr. Turner reassured me, when I did see him, with the remark that even if I had been three days later in my application it would still have been in time. But from everything I had heard I was almost sure that I would not get my ticket. I requested Mr. Turner to post my ticket, if he got it, to Berlin or to Vienna (in May).

Two letters which I had taken from India proved of no use. One was to Sir Stanley Reed with whom I was unable to establish contact; the other was to an Indian gentleman who had settled in London, from his brother. The Indian gave me an appointment at the Dorchester Hotel and when I called there I was told that no one of his name lived there. Just as I was leaving he breezed in with an apology, told me he had an appointment in fifteen minutes, asked me if I would have anything to drink, and wanted to know what he could do for me. When I told him I was a teetotaler and vegetarian, I fell in his estimation. "All Indians who come here at first are like that," he said; "my brother also was the same. But we changed him."

I shifted uneasily in my seat before this advocate of meat-and-drink conversion. He told me that London was not like Indian towns. Here, he said, everyone leaves you alone and does not interfere with you; no gossiping, no scandal-mongering. And then seeing my face fall, "I suppose in India also things are different now. I have not been there for ages."

He asked me why I did not stay at the Dorchester instead of at a small hotel. I looked meditatively at my cigar—the only sign of affluence about me.

"Of course I do not want," said my tomato-cocktail host, "to pry into your finances."

W E S T O F S U E Z

"Not at all," I replied ; "you see I expect to be in Europe for six months and I do not want to spend all my money on hotel bills."

He asked me if he could do anything for me in particular. I said I would let him know if anything occurred to me. Then he explained that the present moment was inopportune for him for domestic reasons. My time was up and I left. I rather liked him and I am sure if I had really known what I wanted, I could have got him to help me. But I did not and I never approached him again. It was obvious to me that, if I kept pace with him, I would have to cut short my trip by a couple of months.

That was one type of the Indian abroad—the man who has got on in England. I met another type, the very opposite—a man who had made his money in India and was now relaxing for a few months in England. I had seen him on the boat going out. The occasions for our meeting there had been few. As I came out of a theatre, I found him strolling about and, before I could lose myself in the crowd, he had spotted me. He told me he was going to the milk bar, the Black and White near Piccadilly, where the milk was "as good as we get it in India." I was amused. The milk we get in India is not exactly perfect. The Black and White, I was further told, got its milk from the King's own farms, an added attraction to my companion. As I am neither republican nor royalist, it tasted no better, and no worse, than the milk handed out at the numerous milk bars in London.

We strolled on . Outside a tobacconists, there was a woman standing, apparently waiting to cheer up the lonely tourist or resident who looked for company and would pay for it. My companion wished her good evening. There was no response and shortly afterwards a man came out of the shop, joined her and they went on. I asked my companion where and when he

INDIA IN LONDON

had got introduced to the lady, if it was not an indiscreet question. He laughed jauntily. "You do not need to know them beforehand," he said with a knowing smile.

I told him earnestly that it was improper to do this and then, seeing he was not moved, added a more telling argument. I said that the cavalier who had come out of the shop, might well have taken offence and tackled my puny acquaintance. As I bade him a hurried good-night, I saw his eyes go past me. He was appraising with a wistful eye the women who were loitering aimlessly and suggestively near the Palace Hotel.

And that was another type.

I put in a couple of plays before leaving on April 12th for Berlin. My plane left early in the morning. It was only as I got into it that I realised that I was leaving London without tipping anyone but the night porter at my hotel. To lighten my luggage I had bought a new suitcase and left my old one and my handbags with Mr. Cooper of the Central Exchange Bank of India.

It was a long drive to Croydon by bus and the streets were deserted as we went through them early in the morning. As I stepped into the aeroplane and got into my seat, I thought how different this was from a sea voyage. Looking out of the window, one has the illusion that one is on a slope. You are: but the incline is in the plane not on the ground outside.

In a netted pocket in front of you are the accessories of air travel—cotton wool, chewing gum and a brown paper bag for emergencies. All of us that day had strong insides and there were no emergencies. To guard against all trouble I popped the chewing gum into my mouth. After I had licked the mint off, the rubber base nearly made me sick. Automatically I reached for my cigar case. "No smoking," said the attendant with a smile as he handed me last week's *Illustrated London News*—a poor substitute.

W E S T O F S U E Z

Another half-hour and I pass the rubber piece to the other side of my mouth. We are now above the clouds. I seek refuge in Priestley's "Midnight on the Desert." The journey is getting monotonous. At 10-20 we start descending. Eagerly the travellers flatten their noses against window-panes. Below us richly carpeted fields pass by. We have reached the land of tulips. A bump, a few jerks and the plane comes to a halt. Amsterdam at last. As we step out, the men get their cigarettes out for a quiet smoke. The chewing-gum has given my jaws a stiff feeling. Can I breakfast at the aerodrome? It seems I can, in spite of lack of appetite. As I put in my third cup of coffee, my waiter whispers loudly to me that my plane is ready. This time it is a smaller one.

We are now looked after by a woman steward who insists on getting us strapped to our seats. She apparently takes her duties very seriously for she goes round asking us all if we are comfortable. This is hardly the time to argue the case with aeroplane stewards. We are very comfortable. Finding there is nothing to see out of my window, I lend my binoculars to my neighbour, an elderly lady who is in grave danger of dozing off. She conducts a minute scrutiny of the clouds below.

The attendant comes round and tells us that we have had a very good journey. She hopes we like air travel. My neighbour says she has enjoyed it thoroughly. I too feel it is a good way of travelling for those who want to get to places in a short time. But really the railway affords you good scenery; the ship, company. Travelling in a plane is not travelling in the true sense of the word—not the travel "that improves the mind."

Air travel has its own advantages. It is a clean method of locomotion. The Customs officials conduct a less extensive search into the possessions of air travellers, because one cannot

INDIA IN LONDON

carry so much along by aeroplane. But it costs a lot, directly and indirectly. First the initial outlay for the ticket which one might incur in the optimistic faith that after all one can cut down on other things. And then you find you cannot. Just by that one journey my expenses in Berlin went up a clear 100 per cent.

It was like this. Getting out of my plane I found that I was absolutely at sea. Although I felt familiar and quite at home in returning to a city which I had investigated well on my first visit, I had no desire to go back to the same hotel. I approached the inquiry officer for a good hotel in the centre of the city, but not an expensive one. He gave me the *Atlas*.

London prices had spoilt me completely and when the hotel reception clerk offered me a room with bath and breakfast for nine marks, I jumped at it as at a bargain. It was very cheap considering the 10s. 6d. for room and breakfast charged by the Abbotsford Hotel, but it was exactly twice what I had paid at the Stettiner Hotel. And everything else was correspondingly high.

CHAPTER IX

THE OTHER HALF BERLIN

The Third Empire will be an Empire of organisation in the midst of European chaos.—*Moeller van den Bruck.*

There is a great advantage in revisiting a city. I had seen as much of the sights in Berlin as I could take in. I had formed contacts. The foundation of a second successful visit had, therefore, been well laid. Out of the many attractions Berlin offered me, I picked Albrecht Von Koss of the German Orient Association. The first thing I did on fixing up my hotel accommodation was to call on him.

I was amply rewarded. Herr Von Koss had a neat programme planned out for me, only the dates had to be filled in. He asked me to call at the Berlin Tourist Association, "where," he said with a twinkle in his eye, "a very charming young lady will assist you." He told me that the next morning he would take me to the People's Welfare Association, and directed me to take the Underground to a particular station. I would reach it, he said, in half an hour after two changes. Then I was to take a taxi to the address he had written down for me. "Thus," he said, "you will spend only 1 mark 50 pfennigs, instead of five or six marks, which a trip by taxi the whole way would cost you." Von Koss asked me, when I left, to keep in touch with him and to let him know if there was anything I specially wanted.

THE OTHER HALF BERLIN

That afternoon I stepped into the office of the Berlin Tourist Association on Unter Den Linden., The office is located in spacious rooms and, so far as I could make out, there was no one in the lounge whom I could approach. The lounge (for purposes of convenience I shall call it that) was divided into two unequal parts by a counter running from wall to wall. Beyond the counter there were a couple of typewriters. Suddenly a figure raised itself from the other side and came through to where I was.

I was filled with remorse at my first sight of Fraulein Schroeder because, frankly, I felt I had disturbed her well-earned siesta. Later I found that her expression was the result more of boredom than of lack of rest. She took me, after the usual preliminaries, into the next room, a kind of drawing-room. This was partitioned by a heavy curtain. Looking beyond the curtain I saw a large table and several chairs arranged in a business-like manner. In the section where I was, there were tables and chairs and ash-trays and all sorts of papers and tourist literature.

Fraulein Schroeder had an exceedingly uncomfortable time trying to fix a programme for me. The season had not started and I was evidently the first tourist in Berlin, even on my second visit.

"Do you wish to see the sights in Berlin?" asked Fraulein Schroeder.

"I have seen them," I replied.

"But Herr Von Koss told us you had just come," she queried, as though I had been misunderstood either here or there.

"Yes," I said. "But I have been here before. I do not need help to see the museums, the statues and the buildings of Berlin—least of all official help. What I am interested in is the

W E S T O F S U E Z

social and economic work, the welfare enterprises, the labour camps and things like that."

Fraulein Schroeder was rather upset by this demand of mine. She left me with an "excuse me" and returned after a few minutes from behind the curtain.

"Have you seen the Olympic grounds?" she asked.

I knew that, if I told the truth, I would never get beyond the sight-seeing stage.

"Yes," I replied, dreading that she would ask me what I liked best there: "but I am not interested in such things."

After seeing the place, I am not surprised that a baffled expression came over the girl's face.

"Have you seen Templehof?" she said when she had recovered sufficiently. I did not know what Templehof was. It could not be a night-club, I thought rapidly to myself, because no woman in a tourist association would mention it to a stranger as a place worth visiting. It could not be a museum. Possibly, I thought, it might be Herr Hitler's residence. If it was, there was nothing to see in it and besides I had passed it once or twice on my previous visit. At any rate there was no harm in asking her to repeat the question and possibly she might even amplify it. I told her I had not caught what she said. She asked me if I had seen the Berlin Airport. This rather took me by storm. I had not expected to be directed to the station at which I had got out, for one of the main sights.

"But," I replied, "I have just come from there."

Another hope dashed. A dive behind the curtain and then, like a conjuror producing a rabbit out of his hat, Fraulein Schroeder threw out the great idea.

THE OTHER HALF BERLIN

"Have you been to the Kraft durch Freude offices?" she enquired.

"No," I said, "but I should like to know what it is first."

Her face fell. She was sure that I would reject the proposal with scorn. It was in desperation that she explained the organization "Strength through Joy" set up by Nazi Germany. I said that I would be glad to go. She replied, "wait a minute," and dashed behind the curtain. Before the screen closed behind her, I saw her execute a dance of sheer joy at having settled so difficult a customer. A sedate entry followed a few minutes later. I was to see the offices of the "Strength through Joy" association in the company of a Berlin Tourist guide two days later.

The Berlin Tourist Association has working for it a number of men who know foreign languages and are employed in commercial offices in Berlin. They are given an 'off-day' every month or so when they help foreigners around the City. I came in contact with five young men during the time I stayed there and I found them all singularly broad-minded and prepared for any discussion. I saw more of them than was really necessary.

I visited one institution after another with the help of the Berlin Tourist men. In fact I had to exert myself to get some of my evenings free to myself. The Association starts at 9-30 and it can be depended on to hand you back for your lunch at 12 o'clock; to take you over again at 2-30 and leave you in the evening at 6. If you have any energy after that to go out, you can fix up a programme with your guide. But generally speaking few people have any enthusiasm after a full day. I always managed to get either my evenings or mornings off and I used to call the tourist men to a lunch or dinner informally to

W E S T O F S U E Z

talk things over; this was not difficult since they were educated and cultured men.

One of them was a young man passionately fond of chasing after every soldier in uniform he saw. His redeeming feature was a passion for the open air. After the third hurried descent from a tram to see "the soldiers passing by," I decided to get him to the Olympic playing-field. He learnt that I would probably be in London during the Coronation and he was all agog with excitement.

"Then you must stay on," he said, "to see Hitler's birthday on April 20. In London you will see a parade of wealth and of power; here you will see a demonstration of might, grand in its simplicity."

There is no magic in dates and I decided to stay on, though I kept my own counsel. I had no intention of seeing it with my enthusiastic friend.

II.

The Berlin Tourist Association gave me a rare time and I gave the workers in it a good deal of practice in dealing with eccentricity. The height of my adventures was when I asked to be taken to the Ministry of Propaganda and was taken over by Dr. Schmidt, President or Director of the Tourist Association, to meet the man in charge of the Eastern section. Dr. Schmidt evinced great interest in Indian affairs and was hurt when I explained to him the close parallel between modern Germany and ancient Indian customs. He said that he could not understand how the Germans who believed in strength, and we who had an inexplicable faith in non-violence, could have any common ground.

With other Germans who have spoken on this subject to me, he was obsessed by an incurable belief that the Fakir of Ipi was the sword-arm of the non-violent movement.

THE OTHER HALF BERLIN

"Yes, I admire your Mahatma Gandhi," he said with a shrewd smile.

"I am surprised to see a man of your broad views in Germany," I replied, "for I was told that I should not speak of Gandhiji's pacific work in your country."

Dr. Schmidt had a pained look on his face. "But Gandhi," he retorted, "is not a pacifist. Look at the Fakir of Ipi."

"What has he to do with Gandhi?" I asked.

"Ah," said Dr. Schmidt, "you Indians are very clever but you can't fool me."

Our discussion took place during the walk to the Ministry of Propaganda. Dr. Schmidt had to pull me back twice to prevent an accident, I was so taken aback by this bee in his bonnet. He held so strongly to his views that he almost made me feel Machiavellian. Finally I did convince him. But then he shot off at a tangent. Yes, he said, Indians believe in inaction, Germans in action. I gave him the old worn-out analogy of the dog sleeping on the road which your first impulse is to kick. Is the man active who kicks the dog or the one who checks himself? Dr. Schmidt said, "The man who kicks the dog, of course."

In Germany, Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru has attracted more attention than Gandhiji. It was but natural, therefore, that in seeking to change the subject to a more agreeable one, Dr. Schmidt should pick on Pandit Jawaharlal. He told me that that very day the German Press had prominently splashed a small message from the Pandit declaring his opposition to any form of compromise. It was headed, "The true spirit of Aryanism" or some such thing. I told Dr. Schmidt that Pandit Nehru would not be exactly flattered by this.

"Why? Does he dislike the Germans?" asked Dr. Schmidt.

W E S T O F S U E Z

"So far as one man can speak for another," I replied with necessary caution, "he dislikes not the Germans but the Nazi methods and programme."

And then I explained with great objectiveness how nationalist India felt on the Jewish question, on the news that had come through to us of Nazi misuse of political power, and Indian aversion from violence and revolution. Many of my friends outside Germany have expressed themselves more strongly to me and asked me if I have laid all these opinions before German friends. I am not made of the stuff of political fanatics or political martyrs. Besides those of the Germans whom I met, were prepared to listen to me and to argue the case out. It would have been I who was unreasonable, if I had delivered monologues on the virtues of democracy to them. We completed the journey in silence.

I was not in the best of moods, when we met the official at the Ministry. As he understood English, I explained in answer to his question whether I wished to know about the Goering Plan and the political philosophy of the Nazis, that I was not interested in politics which after all was only a short-lived aspect of national life, but in more abiding work in social and economic fields. The two exchanged a couple of remarks to the effect that I was a strange fellow, interested in the most unusual things. The gentleman in charge said he would supply me with materials when I got back to India.

As I was leaving, my attention was held by the etching of a woman's head above his chair. Is that Javanese? I asked. No, said the Propaganda man, it is the head of an old Bavarian Queen. How interesting, I murmured, it looks exactly like the Javanese faces. Dr. Schmidt agreed. I moralised maliciously to Dr. Schmidt that the difference among the races must be of recent growth. He said that it was possible. One remark of the Propaganda official gave me food for thought.

THE OTHER HALF BERLIN

"Well," he said casually, "Now you have been with us for some time, how do you like the country? You will agree that you are free to go where you like and meet whom you like and that no restrictions have been placed on your movements."

"I agree, of course," I replied, "but why do you say this?"

He smiled knowingly. It was a smile that lent itself to all kinds of interpretations.

On the night of the 19th I was told by Dr. Schmidt where to stand to see the torchlight parade. Thousands thronged the streets to watch the procession of lights. And without a doubt it was a spontaneous crowding. An hour of waiting and a few minutes of wild delirium as the soldiers passed by, their torches lighting a burning trail a long way down the road. I was surprised that no damage had been done by the naked flames. As I returned to my hotel, I passed along Friedrichstrasse and looked up at the top floor of "Alt Bayern," an old night-club which had suffered from a fire. The bare skeleton of the building looked mournfully down at me. A careless cigarette spark had probably done the damage but it seemed a melancholy postscript to the day's celebrations.

It was my practice in Berlin to take a brisk stroll near the Tiergarten after dinner. I went there that night and coming back lost my way. After some hesitation I approached the first passer-by but he knew no English and was far too dejected to attend to my distress. The next was hardly more useful. At last I met a man who not only knew English but was even prepared to walk part of the way with me. I had a moment of sheer panic when two hundred yards from Unter den Linden on the deserted main avenue, he stopped and, with a hurried "wait," ran down a side-lane. Should I wait or ought I to go on? I waited. He came running back alone. I was relieved.

We spoke of the 20th April, the next day. Was he going to the parade? He shrugged his shoulders.

W E S T O F S U E Z

"I have no time," he told me, "to go marching up and down with a flag in my hand. But for you it will be interesting."

Would there be a crowd?

"Out of a population of over four millions, there must be some fools," he remarked sagely; then probably feeling he had said too much to a stranger, he bade me good-bye.

Then came the 20th. I had tried hard to get a ticket to the platform but it was not possible. The Ministry of Propaganda would have "gladly obliged" but the distribution of tickets was not in their hands. "The birthday of the Leader," I was told, "is primarily a military function." And so it was. Tanks and armoured cars went in ungainly procession down Unter den Linden. It was a gala day for the Berliner.

I took my stand opposite the British Consulate on Willhelmstrasse, a few blocks away from the Chancellor's residence. Black-uniformed guards, the pick of Nazi Germany, lined the streets in quaint formation. Every alternate man faced the crowd; every other soldier looked on to the streets. Informal to the degree of chewing jujubes or smoking cigarettes, the soldiers chatted with the spectators. I was wedged in between two old men, looking over a soldier's shoulder (I was on a higher level) into the road. Suddenly, "Getz Kommt," shouted my neighbour nudging me enthusiastically. Herr Hitler's car passed swiftly through the street, the Fuhrer sitting beside the driver. Then the more easily distinguishable figure of Gen. Goering rode in the car behind.

That evening along with some hundreds I waited outside Herr Hitler's residence with a friend. "That light in the window upstairs," he remarked and then, "no, it is only a reflection." The crowd grew impatient. Whistles, trumpet-blasts, songs, cheers and loud shouts produced no effect. I turned to my friend.

THE OTHER HALF BERLIN

"Is this how your leaders treat their public," I queried, "why don't they break the police-cordon?"

"Oh, no," said my companion in a hushed voice, "that is never done."

An hour more and many of the people are leaving.

"Do you see that balcony?" said my friend. "Hitler addresses the crowds usually from there."

That was all we saw. •

Another fifteen minutes and I turned to go. I was hungry and even a sight of Herr Hitler would not still the cravings of an empty stomach. My companion, more for my sake than his own, was reluctant to give up an opportunity of seeing him. And then the word went round that Herr Hitler had flown to Munich. Even a disciplined people can be moved to exasperation. As a slight drizzle came down, I heard murmurs and I saw scowls on the faces of the people gathered there. My friend told me that they were all complaining about the long wait.

"They should have been told earlier," he remarked.

I remarked rather uncharitably that none of our national leaders would dream of playing hide-and-seek with their admirers ; and that, even if they did, the crowds would not adopt the methods of the cinema public to call them out.

"They might all admire Hitler," I said, "but these trumpet-blasts and whistles and, what would be usually called cat-calls, are a most undignified procedure."

His loyalty to Hitler was in conflict with his responsibility as "host" to me.

III.

If you know the structure of one social organization in Nazi Germany, you know the structure of all of

W E S T O F S U E Z

them. The ~~air~~s naturally are different and some of them are very ~~ingenious~~. Anglo-Saxon and Anglo-Saxon influenced visitors ~~are~~ always told that most of these institutions are voluntary because voluntary work appeals to the Anglo-Saxon mind far more than state-aided work. When I asked more than once if the work had been carried on by the Nazis before they came into power, I was told politely that it had, though naturally not on so large a scale. When I once asked if it could be carried on on the same scale if the Nazis lost their political influence, I was told even more politely that the possibility need not be considered because it was remote.

I went one morning to the Kraft durch Freude head offices and was initiated into the mysteries of welfare work in Germany. The organisation looked after the leisure of the German worker and held itself responsible for improvements in working conditions in many a factory. Trips through Germany organised by the Association helped the workman to see his own country ; travel overseas opened the world outside to him. A big ship was under construction in Hamburg for the purpose. On a visit to Portugal, I was told, the local inhabitants felt the hands of the "tourists" to see if they were real workers ; they were astonished to see they were.

I was shown photographs of a factory in which workers carried on in "next-to-ideal" conditions. "I am sorry that you cannot go to see it," said my informant ; "because it is a munitions factory. But there are the photographs."

In vain I expostulated that photographs might prove anything or nothing ; that I had myself seen photographs of hotels that exaggerated ; that better conditions may be needed in the munitions trade to attract workers ; and, last but not least, that to my untrained mind a munitions factory could hide its secrets as well as any book in German. There was a chocolate factory, said the Berlin Tourist man, which

THE OTHER HALF BERLIN

was very good and which I would enjoy seeing.....I accepted, to my shame be it said, the sop--the ~~Trumpf~~ chocolate factory.

At Trumpf's next day, we—I was accompanied by a Berlin tourist man and one from the Kraft durch Freude—saw the conditions under which Germany's sweet tooth was gratified. Here it could be truly said that every prospect pleased. There were gardens all over and, what was more, each worker was allotted his own little plot for cultivation. The building itself was constructed so as to let in light and air. I was introduced to the only cheerful individual in the group, the gentleman who noted the complaints of the workers and conveyed them to the management. He was elected to this high office by his fellow-workers and, if he was not satisfactory, they changed him. This man had not been changed.

I asked him how many complaints he had received. He said he had not had many. I remarked to my companion that his work must indeed be light and I did not see what need there was for two assistants. He translated obligingly and the complaints man looked none too happy at the remark. He was in a dilemma. The admission that there were many complaints would mean that the men (or rather women for there were more of them) at the factory were not happy. On the other hand, he could scarcely say he had no work.

After an inspection of the Trumpf works, I asked my guide from the Berlin tourist office and the man from the Kraft durch Freude office and the man from the factory, whether I could be taken to a factory not run on these model lines, so that I might contrast the progress made in recent years. A short conference ensued and then my guide told me there were no bad factories. I produced from my capacious overcoat pocket a typed sheet given me at the Kraft durch Freude office and indicated a passage which ran :

WEST OF SUEZ

"At present there are far more neglected than model plants. The gloomy normal type of working place is more or less familiar: the ugly unpleasant exteriors and surroundings: the dust-covered windows: the uncared for yards; the dirty dark working places and the still darker dressing and washing rooms frequently located in damp smelling cellars.....It does not mean anything to a nation to possess a number of parade factories which can be shown with pride to interested visitors from other countries."

This official statement could not be repudiated. My guides smiled and said that they would arrange things at the office for a visit, "tomorrow or the day after." I did not hear more from them on this subject. Nor can I blame them for it; since officially nothing was done to hide the truth, there was no deception involved.

As we stepped out of the factory loaded with packets of chocolates, I remarked to my guide that the workers did not look very cheerful and that under the Nazi regime the working man had a better time than the office clerk. The second observation was accepted tentatively. The explanation given me of the sour looks on the workers' faces was, "The Berliner is always a morose fellow."

Some one later told me that he had his own doubts of Nazi policy. "The worker," he said, "the world over is a discontented fellow. The more you give him the more he wants. Can it not be that by pampering the labourer, the Nazis are preparing trouble for themselves?" My eager acceptance of this point of view, I remember, caused him to retreat from his position. He did not really doubt that the leaders knew best.

My contact with the Kraft durch Freude ended with a visit to the Folks' Theatre, to a performance of the light opera, the "Count of Luxemburg." For a nominal sum the German worker

THE OTHER HALF BERLIN

gains admission to the show. All the seats have but one price for him and it is decided by lots whether he gets a good place or a bad one. The theatre was packed to capacity when I went there and most of the audience seemed to be drawn from the poorer classes. I was told that before this arrangement had been arrived at, the theatres used to be badly attended.

All these advantages the working man secures by contributing ten per cent of his salary or wages to the Labour Service. By some this is regarded as an unnecessary tax. "When I want to go on holiday," said a rugged individualist to me, "may be I do not like to go with a crowd; if I go to a theatre, I like to be free from my class." As a rule the white collars do not appreciate this compulsory association with the workers.

The Peoples' Welfare Organisation had its office usefully decorated with chart and map. There was a chart illustrating the increase in births in the last five years. It is not always that the increase is maintained—I think there was a drop in 1935. But I never found the reason for this. On the whole the industrial areas are better cared for than the agricultural ones.

The organisation has control of marketing and I was given two instances of marked success. The first was the saving of a surplus cabbage crop for the winter. More significant was a 'fishing rescue' which showed how human nature can be changed by law. It seems that in Germany fish or a particular species of fish, is not highly esteemed as food. A community of fishermen who had secured an exceptionally good catch in one year, were at their wits' end because the excessive supply would bring prices down. The organisation stepped in and bought the entire stock from the fishermen; tinned the fish and sold it to the German housewife, along with a booklet on the various ways of preparing it for the table. The

W E S T O F S U E Z

next year the demand exceeded the supply and the State had to intervene to keep prices reasonable.

"Volkswohlfahrt" has also a romantic side to it. It presents newly-married couples with a little booklet telling the parents-to-be how to look after their children. In their generosity, they pressed me to take a copy. I asked whether all Germans knew of this gift. "Of course," I was told. I refused the copy because I had no wish to be laughed at by the German public and considered guilty when I was innocent. Ultimately I took away the booklet.

At the Tourist Association I worried Fraulein Schroeder to fix up a visit to the labour camps. She said that that could only be done on the 22nd April. The new batch which had been taken on for work, was too raw for foreign visitors.

"If there are any camps outside Berlin, in South Germany for instance," I urged, "you could arrange for me to visit them."

"No," replied Fraulein Schroeder, "only camps in Berlin were visited by tourists; the other camps in the country are not to be disturbed."

Window-dressing, after all, can only be done in windows. One cannot expect display at the back of the shop. Well, on the 22nd I was still in Berlin. And I joined the first batch of tourists to a camp just outside the City.

We started out for the labour camp on Thursday morning. I was in disgrace because, owing to a misunderstanding on my part, I was fifteen minutes late. Right out of Berlin we drove to see this "peace" conscription. All sorts of students were digging out in the open. We were taken round and shown the houses of the workmen who also laboured on that ground. We were encouraged to talk to the boys, a few of whom knew English. In fact our guide looked extremely disappointed when some of us refused to use the opportunity. Thence to a camp

THE OTHER HALF BERLIN

where we saw how the boys lived; we walked through their dining-room, their bedroom and so on. But this is not the "moral equivalent of war." It is rather the training-ground for the citizen, a period of preparation before he enters into the two-year military life that is compulsory in Germany.

What surprised me was that this vast annual supply of free labour had not affected the labour market. The men assured me that it had not. That the figures for unemployment had under the Nazi regime fallen from over six million to just half a million was cited as proof of this.

It is difficult to judge the value of these figures in the absence of statistics relating to the "unemployables," which, I heard, had increased in the same period. Moreover, there were the under-employed—by which I do not mean those who feel that they have not enough, which would be a hundred per cent; but those who are unable to keep their expenditure within their income. This is fairly large. I was often told, however, that it was much better that in a transition period all should have something, even though it be below their needs, than that a few should have everything they wanted and more, with the majority in want and despair. There is commonsense in this view.

Not so sound is the fact that year after year the Nazi welfare organisation spends more and more on winter help. If it is true that unemployment is decreasing and that the German people are more prosperous, it must naturally follow that relief-work should show a steady decrease as the Government improves living conditions. Every thousand marks spent on relief above the money spent in previous years is testimony to deterioration. Yet I was shown steady increases in Winter Relief expenditure for the past four years—and shown them with a certain pride that I could not understand.

W E S T O F S U E Z

I had heard often enough that one of the defects of the Nazi relief system was that people were put into jobs that were not only not suited to them but which actually made it impossible for them to hope to follow their vocation later if they had the chance. The classic instance was that of the violinist who is set to building roads. He loses his fineness of touch after a short time and can no more play his instrument. Nazi friends who discussed this, met the question squarely. "Quite so," they answered, "but remember, he may never get the chance to be a violinist. What then is the use of keeping him on as a useless member of society indefinitely instead of training him or using him for other work?" It is certainly kinder in the long run to tell him outright that he should give up his illusion than to feed him on it and leave him in the end a burden to himself and to society.

It was an obvious difference in outlook. The "liberal" English looked at the problem from the individual's side; the "totalitarian" Nazi from the point of view of society. And there was no reconciling the two, even within me. I was equally convinced of the force of both angles. All I could do was to put the other point of view to the people I met.

It is fairly obvious that the advantages offered by Nazi social organisations do not extend to as wide a circle as the Nazis would have us believe. Someone has to pay for the difference between the workers' contribution and the actual cost. I formed a suspicion that the middle class bore more than its share of the burden. It is the weak point in the social system there as elsewhere. That is why so many revolutionary leaders come from the middle class. .

Yet there is no point in belittling Nazi achievements and these are far more than its detractors will allow. To many the Nazi regime has brought a better mode of life and

THE OTHER HALF BERLIN

greater security. After all when one considers that it is only the Jews and political opponents who have suffered, it is easy to understand why the average German is so ready to put up with the system. Moreover as the press is controlled, only the foreign press reports outrages and incidents, and it is not difficult to discredit this as malicious propaganda. Most of the questions I put were received as the mistakes of ignorance, the errors of a mind fed exclusively on British news. I did little to discourage this idea, since it gave me greater freedom.

Nowhere did this attitude help me so much as when I did the Reichstag in company with one of my Berlin Tourist guides. We had a few odd moments between visiting one labour service and another and we found ourselves near the Reichstag which has been only externally repaired since the fire four years ago. The Reichstag is now a museum piece—in any case it would have been that in Nazi Germany. We were taken through the entire building and shown with great precision the exact spot where the incendiary entered the house and the places where he set fire to curtain and woodwork. Questions as to how he eluded the guards were persistently put by me and were received with infinite patience first, then with growing exasperation.

It was an endless and unprofitable discussion, each using the same facts to support different conclusions. That Van der Luppe had maintained a determined silence at the trial proved to my German friends his anxiety not to give away his Communist colleagues. This did not appear equally conclusive to me. I changed the argument but not the subject.

“Why,” I inquired, “has the building not been rebuilt?”

Because, I was told, it is not big enough to hold the larger assembly of today.

W E S T O F S U E Z

"But it could be used for other purposes rather than be left burnt down like this?"

There was an underground railway running near by and a station had been set up which made the building unsafe.

"Was the building of the underground subsequent to the fire?"

It was.

"Then did it not stand to reason that the abandonment of rebuilding ideas was prior to the railway construction?"

Possibly.

"Could it not mean that the Nazis felt no need for a lasting memorial to the democratic idea?"

One could not tell.

"Perhaps they felt the other way about it?"

We had come back to the original point and here we stuck. It was useless going over the same ground again. The Reichstag kept its secret.

CHAPTER X

WITH THE NOT-SO-IDLE RICH

Spending on luxuries and frivolities may often be 'anti-social,' but on the other hand it often provides us with a good deal of amusement which is an immensely important contribution to the supply of immaterial goods.—*Hartley Withers.*

There is no one I can really blame for this part of my stay in Berlin except myself. The tourist agencies in Berlin displayed on the list of attractions a journey through Berlin by night—in three languages. But it was too early in the year to be definite about it and the tour depended on sufficient people joining it.

Well, on the morning of the 18th, two American women at my hotel were discussing the doings of the night before. One of them, disappointed at the faint-heartedness of her fellow tourist, had most courageously done the round of night-clubs with a few adventurous souls who trusted to their good luck and her judgment. The other one who had with greater wisdom gone to bed, rebuked her for her rashness. "Yes, yes," impatiently cut in No. 1, "but all that caution is all right in places like"—here a swift glance to see if I was listening and in a whisper—"Bombay, where anything might happen." This had many revelations for me: first that Bombay had a night-life too; secondly that not all who go out to night clubs, want things to happen; thirdly that Berlin was

W E S T O F S U E Z

a safe city to find out how the other half (or one-tenth) lived; and fourthly, and this came on me in a flash, what America did yesterday, India does tomorrow.

Of all the Berlin Tourist Association guides, one I had marked out for such contingencies. I sounded him and he was game; what was more he had experience. His enthusiasm led to an early fulfilment of the plan. We started that night to do the clubs. The Rezi which we first visited, seemed a middle class entertainment hall. It was gaily decorated and its main attraction was the lighting effect which was manipulated rather unnecessarily. My friend ordered a bottle of Rhine wine for himself. mineral water for me.

"You never drink?" he asked.

"I do not," I replied.

"And you do not dance either," he mused. "Then there can be no interest for you in night clubs."

Before me there were crowds of young men, old men, middle-aged men—all bored to death. The fixed wooden smile revealed the professional dancers. I had finished my mineral. My companion was still toying with his first glass; and there were three more glasses to go in the bottle. He turned to me with a sick smile. "You must not go away with only this in your mind," he said; "there are better places and I shall take you there after this." I was quite prepared. Fifteen minutes later he was just pouring out his second glass. "Look here," he said, "I cannot finish this bottle by myself. And I shall have to do this at all the clubs. What I am to do?"

I suggested that he should leave it for the waiter. He was aghast at the thought. "Why do you not try some?" he urged.

"No," I said firmly.

WITH THE NOT-SO-IDLE RICH

He bowed to the inevitable.

And then I thought that here was my chance to taste Rhine wine which has been so written up in song and verse. By the time he had finished his second glass I had caught up with him. It was an experience and with the second glass I decided to make the best of my non-teetotal status newly acquired. The essence of enjoying your drinks, I had been told, is to shake off all inhibitions. I did. The sweetish bitter taste in my mouth was not the ghost of an inhibition. It was the taste of the wine.

My companion as we stepped out, I noticed, had become all at once more cheerful. He was no longer with one who might be laughing at him. At Haus Germania, we stayed a short twenty minutes. Here the decorations were more tasteful; the clientele almost entirely foreign. There was so much to see here that one did not need external stimulants. We passed swiftly through the rooms decorated after the manner of the capitals of Central Europe and of the German States. It was very like visiting a museum.

Then my companion suggested changing to another club, the Femina, which he felt would complete my education. I agreed. This seemed even more exclusive. We took a table. There was an inter-telephone system between the tables at all the clubs, worthy of a better cause. As soon as we sat down the phone tinkled and I handed the receiver to my friend. Some woman across the room wanted to dance with him. "That," he told me laconically, "is a dancing girl."

At one o'clock we shifted to a smaller room. The practice, I was told, in German night-clubs is to close the public bar and dance-hall at one, and to adjourn into a smaller room, a "private" bar which kept on till three. In view of the fact that I was but a beginner and my companion had a weak

W E S T O F S U E Z

head, he felt it advisable to call a third to share our table. To the several women who came up and asked if they might sit down he returned a polite, Thank you, no. He was a fastidious man.

That, however, could not last the night. In the end he went out and returned from the next room with a companion, who knew English and whom he had met often before. I gathered that the duties of the women, employed as professional dancing partners by the establishment, began at nine at night, ended at three in the morning. I congratulated the new arrival on the short working day. Many a journalist, I said, would rejoice at such a shift. She looked at me quizzically. "Would you like to be drinking all the six hours every day and dancing with every clumsy fellow who comes in?" she asked. I said, no, and profiting by the occasion promptly offered her lemonade instead of an alcoholic drink. She laughed. "We are not here to drink lemonade," she said, "nor to make you all drink it."

I was prepared for almost any turn the conversation would take but the next remark rather stunned me. After a long and earnest look at me, she said laughingly, "I would like to have six children by you." It was said slowly because she did not know English very well and this gave it an extra emphasis. I must have looked foolish for a minute and my companion thought that I had not understood. He told me what our guest of the Femina had said. I recovered my composure and told her I could scarcely oblige during the short time I was in Berlin but I was certain my friend would not fail her in a little thing like that. The lady commented thoughtfully that my friend had not black hair which evidently was my attraction. I advised her to seek a chemist for whatever special shade she needed, instead of incurring the additional burden of a family.

WITH THE NOT-SO-IDLE RICH

From what I could see of the crowd, Femina was not making much money that night. We broke up at three. Even before I rose from my seat something told me, I was in for it. That something was the fact that for the past ten minutes I had with great skill argued a case for Communism in a Berlin night-club to the horror of the young woman at the table. Luckily, it was not yet an over-powering handicap. I lit a cigar (not quite the remedy, I am afraid), balanced myself and walked out steadily if somewhat deliberately. It was a great feat. In a taxi I leant back and opened the windows wide to let in air. This I learnt later was just the wrong thing to do. The cold breeze increases the effects of the drink. Calculations of the amount I had dropped that evening acted like a cold douche on me. I had spent 35 marks and two-thirds of it had been on Rhine wine. The economic man drove the spirit of adventure clean out of me.

I took my key and went up to my room at the Hotel Atlas. The next morning I awoke with a headache which nothing could shake off except the "passage of time." My only consolation, when my friend told me that evening that I had outdrunk him, by two glasses! But he had no headache—alas!

This was a novel experience. I might have tasted alcoholic drinks on other occasions but my natural initial dislike had kept me off them. To even approach the land of drunkenness was a very different matter.

II.

I had not been prepared for so much expenditure in Germany and my registered marks had run out. If I changed my sterling into marks in Germany, I would lose eight marks on every pound. At the American Express, I was told that it would take three days to get the registered marks from Prague. As every day meant more money, I hit on a bold plan.

W E S T O F S U E Z

I would go to Prague myself and get the marks. By this I could save the days, and something like six pounds.

I left Berlin on the night of the 20th. There was a shock awaiting me in my compartment. I was sleeping stretched on the three seats of a third class carriage, my arm over my face to keep the light out. Suddenly just as I was falling into a deep sleep, I felt someone shake me by the arm. I woke up. A man was standing over me and he flashed a light in my face. He asked me several questions but, as they were in German, I could not understand what he wanted. He thought apparently that I questioned his right to examine me and he produced some kind of badge out of his pocket. Secret police? I responded with my passport. A long study of my passport and a consultation with a pocket-book he carried, cleared his suspicions. He put out his light, switched the carriage light off and closed the door with a warm good-night in German.

I had to change a few shillings into Czech crowns at the station and the exchange gave me my money at a rate which was 30 crowns more to the pound sterling than it was on my previous visit. I was rather pleased at this and felt that I would be well rewarded. At the American Express Office, however, I found that I was given only ten crowns more to the pound. I asked why this was so and was told that the woman at the station exchange had given me too much.

It was after all a small amount, somewhere near ten crowns. I decided to be honest and return it to the office at the Wilson station. At the exchange kiosk it took me a long time to convince the woman that I was telling her I had been given too much. Nor could I find the receipt slip issued to me earlier. I began to regret my impulse. Then at last I got it. The moment she saw the paper and the ten crowns laid on it, she understood. I have never seen anyone so much unnerved

WITH THE NOT-SO-IDLE RICH

at the sight of good luck. But for the cage which shut her in (and protected me), it would have been hard to extricate myself from her gratitude. For my part I was so full of my own integrity that I nearly contributed to a road accident.

On my return journey, an old German—a gardener, I think, for he carried a spade and a hoe,—attempted to talk to me. He pointed out the various forts and castles and gardens. As we neared Dresden, he came to me, placed a hand on my shoulder, and pointed out a building in the distance. All I could recognize was a gesture with his hand. I wondered whether he was telling me of a genius who lived there. Then it dawned on me. He was pointing out the lunatic asylum. I inquired with more definite signs if that was so. "Jah, jah," he said as he repeated them. At Dresden he got off. Before he did, he wished me a good journey.

I have often found that the third-class passenger is a more friendly fellow than the second-class one. And from this I have realised that when the British visitor or resident says he prefers the uneducated Indian to the educated, he is not thinking so much of the economic competition as of this universal fact. I have felt the same particularly in England where I knew the language. One cannot live always on the heights of controversy. It is pleasant now and then to be able to expound your pet theories instead of arguing them out.

Dr. Martin of the Quaker Centre was even more elusive on my second visit than he had been on my first. As I too did not need so much help, our opportunities for meeting were few. At a dinner at his house, however, I learnt how homesick the American abroad gets. Dr. Martin compared German trains and German life to trains and life in the States and found them wanting. I think we reached a stage in our relations when the Martin menage looked on my arrival with terror, because they did not

W E S T O F S U E Z

know when I would leave. This was an unfortunate misunderstanding due to the conventional phrase, "Must you go so early?" shot out one evening at me, which I had interpreted too literally.

I met a number of Indian students at the vegetarian restaurant I patronised. They were loud in their praise of German hospitality. One of them told me an interesting story. He and two of his friends had landed in Germany with only a few pfennigs on them but several pounds. The pounds they were unwilling to cash as they would have lost by the transaction. While they were in this quandary, their fellow students came to their rescue. They kept them at the hostel, bearing the expense themselves, for two or three weeks, till the marks came through to the Indian boys. I admired the spirit of the German students. Our students, I felt, could have avoided the inconvenience with a little foresight, or a little energy in approaching a travel agency and converting their money at a favourable rate.

It would be ungracious on my part if I left Berlin without a further reference to Herr Von Koss of the German Orient Association. Von Koss, at least as far as I could make out, was a unique personality for any country. In Germany and in Berlin at that, he was a phenomenon. His outlook on life had a distinct Umar Khayyam touch in it. He was naturally an ideal choice for a linking organisation between nations. I had a letter on Dr. Schneider, as I have mentioned earlier, and when I first called on the Orient Association, Dr. Schneider was on his Easter holiday and Herr Von Koss was in charge. When I called again in April, Dr. Schneider was still on holiday. I remarked that it was rather a long vacation. I do not know whether the vacation has been still extended. If he has the time (and the chance) to worry about his work in Berlin, Dr. Schneider must, I feel sure, rejoice at the thought of its being in competent hands.

WITH THE NOT-SO-IDLE RICH

I had several opportunities of cultivating Herr Von Koss who was the soul of hospitality. Someone has remarked that one's impressions of a town depend very much on the treatment meted out to one by the persons met in the first few days. I had nothing to complain of. Herr Von Koss had been all over in England, in Holland, in Morocco and in Spain, and he was very much a man of the world. His sympathies were all with Gen. Franco and we had to exercise much tact in discussing the Spanish situation. From what I gathered he had met Gen. Franco and was well impressed by him. The graphic account he gave at Kempenski's, Berlin's West-end eating house, of the trouble in Madrid still lingers in my mind.

"You see these waiters," he said; "how polite, how active they are. In Spain it is different. Your dishes are banged in front of you, if they reach so far. Here again, we can talk. In a Spanish restaurant, you cannot hear your own voice, much less your neighbour's, for all are chattering. Anyone who has made a little money, is suspected of being pro-Franco. The atrocities were terrible."

"This," I ventured a feeble protest, "is not what I have heard."

"What does the world know?" he asked unruffled. "Spain is a great country, the most masculine of the Latin race. It is to them what Germany is to the Teutonic; Sweden to the Scandinavian. The language too is a fine one."

He hoped to go back sometime when things had settled down.

The life of individuals follows a more regular pattern than the lives of nations. Von Koss grew autobiographical over his coffee and cigar—"the serious business of the lunch," as he remarked. When launching him out into the troubrous world, his father had advised him after Polonius. "You have two ears,

W E S T O F S U E Z

two eyes," he told him, "but only one mouth. Hear everything, see everything ; say nothing and you will prosper." But Von Koss, I am glad to say, had ignored this fine tip and had prospered. He had been in Morocco during the War and, he announced with a reminiscent chuckle, the French had placed a heavy price on his head.

We had a long discussion on the eugenic laws, more on the principle than on the practice. Von Koss was a staunch eugenist. He was, as he told me, confident that the future of his country would grow out of a eugenically improved race. I have found that the indirect method of argument is often more effective than the controversial. I asked him if it could be said with any measure of certainty that the present laws adopted in Germany would produce an improved race, and left it for the time at that. In the course of a long and rambling conversation we touched on reincarnation.

"I am not a fantastic man," said Von Koss, "but I have seen some strange things which it is difficult to explain otherwise than in terms of previous birth and experience."

The instances he gave me from Morocco and Wales, were certainly proof of a strongly mystic element in Von Koss's make-up, which came into bloom in an exotic atmosphere.

"Then, how," I asked, "can you reconcile eugenics and reincarnation ? Either a man is his own ancestor or he is not. You cannot uphold both spiritual and physical heredity."

Von Koss gave his food undivided attention for a time. Then he offered to give me an introduction to a professor in Munich who had worked the whole thing out.

But not only in giving me opportunities to pick holes in argument was Von Koss of help to me. He gave me several valuable hints for travelling in Germany which I put to good use. "Always take the first seat on the top-deck of the bus;

WITH THE NOT-SO-IDLE RICH

it is like the box seat at an Opera," was one which he illustrated by example. And as I walked down to my seat behind him, I almost felt that the trouble of getting in and out far outstripped the advantages. Once we were seated he played the perfect showman. It was here that Von Koss was at his best. I remember his footnote to planning. "Do you know the Hamburg proverb?" he asked. "First, it begins; then it grows; ending in something other than we expected." I do not know where he picked that one up but certainly it was foreign to Germany. I have often admired his detached outlook. His thinking was not consecutive but for that very reason his remarks stood out like stars on a dark night.

I have often wondered whether absence of logical thinking is a German failing. It was, I found, fairly common. Typical to my mind was the tobacconist who, after congratulating his country on inculcating tobacco patriotism on the demand side and on encouraging production, explained naively that all the cigarette factories were in Hamburg because Hamburg is a seaport.

Without an effort I felt I would not leave Berlin for months. I made that effort on April 22. It was to begin with an ordeal. I was bound for Vienna or Budapest, as the spirit chanced to move me when Vienna drew near. But I was in a carriage which stopped short even of Vienna. After a time the conductor came along, explained patiently that I must go to the other end, picked up my handbag and requested me to shoulder my suitcase. I struggled under this load through the moving train while he marched proudly forward. I was wondering whether he would expect me to tip him or whether he would realise the audacity of the demand. When we reached the compartment, he turned to me with a smile and demanded "some money for the beer." That was the first knowledge of English he displayed. But the tip was satisfactory: he showed me into a compartment which was empty. By myself I should never have spotted it.

CHAPTER XI

THE HEART OF EUROPE

If ever there was a city predestined by geography, history, and character to be a great European capital, it was Vienna.
—*Paul Cohen-Portheim.*

It took me little time to form a high opinion of Vienna and the Viennese. I reached Vienna early in the morning, deposited my luggage in the cloak-room, entered the barber's shop at the station for a shave and, while the barber was busy, formulated a campaign. I decided to get to the American Express and do the city trips. By some misfortune, I read my list of American Express offices wrong and gained the impression that the Vienna office was on a street called "Maximilienstrasse." I strolled merrily down the road, asking three policemen and two citizens where "Maximilienstrasse" was. Every one of them gave me a new direction. After two hours of tramping I looked once more at my list. I found out where Maximilienstrasse was. It was in Munich not in Vienna. The American Express Munich office was on that street!

Any city would look dead at seven in the morning. And at nine I was too tired to look about me. The most nerve-racking job in the world is looking for an elusive street that "is just round the corner" and like prosperity never comes near. I can conceive of no fitter hell for the economic optimist. Yet I am grateful for the opportunity afforded me to appreciate the

THE HEART OF EUROPE

Viennese character. The Vienna citizen is a good-natured fellow. None of the men I approached seemed too busy to put me right. It was only when they came to the place where the street ought to have been but was not, that they raised their hats politely and took leave of me. I too have an innate dislike of unpleasant situations and I could understand their position.

As I moved with a lighted cigar in my mouth, there were many who approached me for a favour. Your true Viennese can no more resist a light than the proverbial moth. What they said to me I did not know. But as I removed my cigar and waited for the next step—patience is easy when you have time at your disposal—they would thrust an unlit cigarette into the flame of my cigar. Before they could escape, I held them to the reward for my favour. I asked for "Maximilienstrasse." I had reason later to wish that I had been less exacting or the Viennese less obliging.

I did Schonbrunn. What can one say about it? Passing through palaces so recently occupied by royalty as Schonbrunn and the German Emperor's residence, I was always strangely moved by the thought that there was more life in them today when the curious could inspect them for a schilling than in the imperial past when birth alone could give admittance to the spacious halls.

Schonbrunn is not abandoned to the lion and the lizard. It is now a museum, a mournful memorial to the tragic Hapsburgs. For a fee you can examine the bed of Franz Joseph, the banqueting halls, the reception rooms, the spinet and the vase. The imperial coaches have made their last journey down the streets of Vienna. Now the tourist can admire at close quarters the ingenious springing of these conveyances. Through majestic windows we peer into the gardens, once the exclusive privilege of monarchs and their courts. Schonbrunn is dead as Pompeii

W E S T O F S U E Z

In the afternoon I took the tourist bus to Grinzing. I had to eat first. Among the restaurants listed as suitable in my directory, was one which I reached half an hour before the bus was to leave. I approached the entrance and looked down the steps. Below a few steps was a cellar-like room furnished with bare tables thoroughly unattractive to look at. I gave it up and raced back to the Opera to catch my bus.

Scenes of great natural beauty lie on the road to Grinzing. A New Zealander was thrilled to find the little inn at which Edward VIII drank his "heuriger" as Prince of Wales. He decided to come back again to emulate the Prince. Women in picturesque attire passed us on their way to church. As we returned to the Opera, I decided to leave for Budapest.

There was no train that I could take that night, and I was compelled to stay on in Vienna. I selected the Park Hotel (opposite the East Station) and telephoned to the Quaker Centre for my letters. Miss Cadbury who was at the Centre, called me over. I went to 16, Singerstrasse. After I had taken my letters, Miss Cadbury informed me that there was a meeting of the International Centre that evening which she would like me to attend. It was a choice between sitting by myself in my hotel and meeting some of the young Viennese. I dined at the Scala and returned in time for the meeting. "In time" did I say? I was early for, like us in India, the Viennese have a happy disregard for time-tables.

The discussion that evening was on unemployment and somehow it came round to rearmament as a method of unemployment relief. I had no intention of contributing anything but, when someone stated categorically that rearmament had helped Germany to get over unemployment, I questioned it. In Hamburg at any rate there seemed to be a feeling that the development of war industries had weakened

THE HEART OF EUROPE

the peace industries dependent on coal and iron; what was a movement of population in work had too readily been mistaken for an improvement in conditions.

The speaker hotly questioned this and told me that even in "your England" the prices of ordinary articles had gone up owing to armaments manufacture. I said that this not only proved my contention but extended it to all countries, fascist or democratic. This produced even more arguments and more references to "your England" till finally I had to protest that neither by birth nor possession nor in any other way could I or anyone else call England mine. •

The tea that followed was informal and a young woman who knew life in Germany and in Austria, showed me how enamoured she was of the Nazi system. She said that there was more real democracy in Germany today than before the Nazis came to power.

"A small example," she said. "It is usual to observe all sorts of formalities in addressing your social superiors and your elders in German countries. Well, when I went recently to stay with my aunt in Germany, she told me that I should not address her in the traditionally polite way because it would cause trouble. The State does not tolerate these meaningless distinctions."

There was much more in this strain and I complimented her on her enthusiasm which was certainly unequalled in Nazi Germany. She thought it a doubtful compliment. The enforcement of democratic ways amused me. There was too, I found, more anti-Semitic feeling in Vienna (and later in Budapest) than in Berlin. It was hinted to me that almost every advocate of internationalism was a Jew or Jewish-inspired. A tradition for Jews to be proud of but not, I am afraid, quite merited.

W E S T O F S U E Z

I was feeling pleased with myself at the discussion. The Viennese, I felt, were more intelligent and better informed than others I had met. That I could keep up an argument with them, inconclusive as all controversy with intelligent and well-informed persons must be, was a subtle compliment which I paid myself. It was, therefore, pardonable, when, after saying good-bye to my friends, I misunderstood a greeting from three women on Singerstrasse as a friendly salutation instead of a would-be-more-than-friendly approach. I replied and was taken aback to draw down a flow of German upon me. I extricated myself by a vigorous "Nein, nein," and passed down; only to be met a little lower down by a young woman who told me in English she wanted to make me happy, as she dangled a key before her to make her meaning clear. I did not want to be made happy. I told her so and then rushed on.

There were more women near the next crossing. I looked about me. Slowly a taxi drew near. I hailed it and asked the man to drive me to my hotel a quarter of a mile away. I was taking no chances. If the International group at the Vienna Centre is hurt by my foolish error, I apologise abjectly. But respectability has no hall-mark to distinguish it. Why should people who had every opportunity of speaking to me in a room at 16, Singerstrasse, want to speak to me outside? You might well ask.

To give a connected account of Vienna, I must leave out the next four days (24th to 27th April) when I was in Budapest. In the train coming back on the evening of the 27th, I had as fellow passengers two Australian women who were in difficulties through ignorance of German. I helped them with the conductor. Their tickets were to the West Station, but this part of the train was bound for the East. I gathered that the conductor advised them to change to another carriage at the East Station. I did not know German myself. But I

THE HEART OF EUROPE

offered to help them to reach their destination when they got to Vienna.

"After all," I said, "you should be able to reach your hotel from the East Station as well as from the West."

"But our tourist man," they objected, "will be waiting at the West Station."

I reassured them. Spreading out my map in front of me, I worked out where their hotel was. As we neared Vienna, my heart failed me. Vienna had proved difficult for me alone to negotiate. What chance had I of tackling it with two women? But I kept my fears to myself.

The elder woman was rather exasperated by the failure of responsible officers to know English. I told her that I had felt the same thing at first but later had begun to admire our own audacity in travelling through these countries knowing only English. That did not exactly promote friendly relations. At the station they were met by their guide and my offer, by a merciful dispensation, was taken for the deed.

My hotel reception clerk at Budapest had told me that my train would reach Vienna at eight in the evening. Not allowing for the Hungarian view of time, I relied implicitly on his information and did not trouble to verify it. As a matter of fact I was at Vienna station at 7-30 and, though I had wired Miss Cadbury that I would reach her Centre at eight, I decided to go straight on without wasting time.

When I went to 16, Singerstrasse, I placed my suitcase at the foot of the stairs—they are rather hard to negotiate—and went up. No one seemed to be in. I sat on my suitcase for a time, considering what I should do. Then I walked down the street to the left of the Centre looking into a shoe shop near by. Came back and still found the place locked. Went out to my right and hit on the Dom Royal Hotel at 3,

W E S T O F S U E Z

Singerstrasse; walked back, picked up my suitcase and booked a room. After all my travels, I thought to myself, it would be absurd if I sat on Miss Cadbury's doorstep like a lost kitten waiting for her to return. From the hotel I sent over a note asking for my letters and apologising for my mistake. Miss Cadbury's reply was an understanding one. There was in it too a slight hint of relief at the ultimate solution.

Mr. Muskatti, a Bombay businessman, was with his family at the Royal Hotel and also an English couple returning from Calcutta to England who were spending a few days in Vienna. I was glad to help Mr. Muskatti with a couple of introductions in Budapest and in Berlin which would put him right there. Vienna once again failed me, I must admit, when I tried to help the two Calcutta people with advice regarding a restaurant. I recommended a cafe which I had been to the previous evening but unfortunately I gave it a wrong name. It was late in the evening when I passed the place again. I read the sign-board above and found it was quite different. "The Cafe New Bristol" like Maximilienstrasse was something that did not exist. I received a letter next day returning my guide-book and thanking me coldly for the help I had given them. It seemed to me to be steeped in sarcasm.

I liked Vienna. That I made so many mistakes is evidence of the fact that I felt very much at home there. Buses, trams, the opera, the cafes and the gardens — I took them all in my stride. I had seen the Marx Buildings for the working classes. I was anxious to see them again closer. Miss Cadbury gave me a letter of introduction to a woman, who lived there. She was out when I called. That did not prevent me from looking over the immense structure. There is a large garden in the centre with flats all round.

There was a model nursery or children's home to which Miss Cadbury gave me an introduction. I had to get a letter or

THE HEART OF EUROPE

permit from an office behind the Town Hall. It took me fifteen minutes to find the place and another six to get at the entrance. Afterwards it was a difficult job to get myself understood. About six of us were waiting outside and after half an hour there were still six of us. I feared I would spend the rest of my days waiting for an audience with, I did not know, whom. I gave it up.

Once again I attended a meeting of the international group at the Friends' Centre. I was early this time and there were two young men whom I had met on the previous visit with whom I started a discussion on the celebrations of May Day. As we were talking, a young woman came in from the next room and asked who the Welshman was whom we had that day. We asked her what she meant. She said that she had heard someone talking in the room from outside and could have sworn that it was a Welsh voice. She turned to me and said, "It must, of course, have been you." I had heard that twice before and was anxious to know whether it was a compliment or a reflection, when an Englishman (or woman) said it to a perfect stranger. She was equally eager to get to the origin of the intonation and ultimately we agreed that it must have been the combined effect of studying under Scottish, Irish and English professors and a number of Indians who had derived their pronunciation from various members of the Anglo-American family but not a Welshman in them, and of frequent attendance at American talkie theatres. We had just worked through to this conclusion when a voice expert came in by a strange coincidence. Mr. J. Clokie was training his voice for singing. He had as tutor a stern man who put him on a strict vegetarian diet, kept him off tobacco and alcohol, and ordered him to bed before ten. The secret of vocal success was, he told me, to talk down your throat instead of out into the air. This was less of a strain

W E S T O F S U E Z

and it gave a deep throaty sound to your utterances. Even my voice, he said, could improve. I am in any case but a poor talker and a throaty voice would make me even more unsociable.

I sat out in a cafe till two in the morning listening to Mr. Clokie's views on men and things and, especially, on the lecture of the evening. An Englishwoman had given us a talk on Pacifism. In itself quite unexceptionable, there is a none too subtle incongruity about an Englishman (or woman) preaching this cause in continental Europe. There are many Europeans who feel that the British Empire is moving to its end, and that all British pacifists are interested in prolonging its existence by preaching against war and armed aggression. To do so when Britain was officially rearming, added but so much more to their suspicions.

The House of Parliament, the outside of museums (I had no wish to go through the interiors any more), the Town Hall by day and on the 1st of May, floodlit at night, the Opera, the Burgtheatre, the Churches, Schonbronn and the various monuments impressed me with the grandeur of Vienna's past. The fact that on the faces of the Viennese and in their manners and talk there is a gentleness which can be seen in few other parts of Europe, seems to show a permeation of general culture. I was in Vienna on May 1, when the workers celebrated May Day. I joined the crowds and I was surprised to see the manner in which men and women comported themselves.

There is very little of what we are used to call European civilisation in post-war Europe. The Eastern parts are Asiatic and will probably ever remain so. The Western is American-influenced. To an outsider it seems that there are today two centres of pure European culture—Stockholm and

THE HEART OF EUROPE

Vienna. M. Gustave Le Bon in "The World Unbalanced" regards the great failure of the Versailles Treaty to be the dismembering of the Austro-Hungarian Empire while the German Empire was practically left intact. German Austria after this act had naturally to seek closer alliance with Germany. If Germany could have been split into republics following the areas of her States, it would have gone far to preserve the peace of the world, says Le Bon. And he thinks that it would have been easy to do so because the Empire was a new one and the provinces had no urge to unity. I had heard this in Germany myself, but of course differently put. There I was told that Bismarck had brought the Princes together, Hitler had brought the peoples.

However that might be, the Austro-Hungarian Empire went and, after twenty years, Austria has gone too. Once more Vienna, after the Austro-German union in March, 1938, is at the parting of the ways. Will she grow into the capital of modern Germany or will she sink into oblivion as a provincial town? Nothing could be more fitting than that Vienna supplants Berlin as the centre of the Germanic world. It would be a proud day for Vienna. And it would mean much more to the German people.

As summer came near, I was able on occasion to don my *achkan* and *pyjama*. In Berlin it drew a little attention at the Opera and on my way to it; but it was only a momentary interest. In Vienna on the other hand people looked me up and down, stopped dead in the street and eyed me curiously, and on one occasion, a party of English-speaking men and women exclaimed, "Oh, it is wonderful." I replied with "Glad, you like it," and passed on. The only reason why I did not keep to the dress throughout was that it would surely have sent my expenses up considerably.

I was definitely growing dress-conscious. My overcoat, I had long discarded as unworthy of Europe. I found that

W E S T O F S U E Z

whatever else a man might not have, he always invests in a tolerable overcoat. Except when I had to cross the Channel, when I shivered with cold, I never felt the lack of one as a serious discomfort. But I had reduced twenty pounds or so, and my clothes required a certain dexterity in wearing which was difficult at social functions. In Vienna I hesitated long between buying a suit and buying an overcoat. Ultimately I invested in a hat which was nearly the ruin of me. The hat was an expensive one, extremely beyond my pocket. Every time I redeemed it out of a cloak-room, I had to tip the attendant extravagantly. I was driven to the habit of keeping my things with me instead of putting them in a cloak-room. To set off the hat I bought myself a suit the day before I left Vienna. This too was an impulse but it was a cheap one.

There was, however, a method in this. Dr. Paranjpye had, as part of my equipment to face England, given me a letter of introduction to the secretary of the National Liberal Club. Now England, more than any other place, I had found, attached an importance to clothes. (My *akhkan* was not appreciated there but rather looked down upon as a subdued form of nudity.) I planned accordingly to make myself presentable, externally, before I went there. I posted my application in advance and was declared eligible for temporary membership, but I did not go there. But that is another story. I have more than once been on the verge of pitching my hat out of the window, and often rather than suffer under the tyranny of a hat I have stepped out bareheaded.

No one knows his Vienna unless he has frequented the cafes. I was always a coffee-drinker and Vienna offers the tribe every variety one can think of. An order for a cup of coffee brings along with it two glasses of water and newspapers in whatever language you can read. Your glasses of water are replenished as you empty them, almost indefinitely. The English-

THE HEART OF EUROPE

speaking guest is given the London *Times* and the *Daily Mail* and a few illustrated papers and one or two American newspapers.

The cafe is on the Continent what the club is said to be to the Englishman. I have been shown an old gentleman surrounded by half-a dozen youngsters enter a cafe and the leader deliver a monologue for almost an hour ; it was, I was told, a professor taking his class.

It is easy to remain long at the Viennese cafe but hard to get away soon. There is only one individual who can or will collect on your bill. You can recognise him by two leather bags which he carries behind him under his coat-tails. I saw this first in Prague and ever since I was often dropping things to get the pay-waiter to stoop and reveal this burden to me.

It has always been a problem to me why the selling of cakes is entrusted to a different set of persons, mostly women. You order your cake and pay for it on the spot. Then your coffee comes along brought by a waiter who disappears until you want more coffee. The cry of "Zahlen bitte" which ran periodically through the room, puzzled me but I soon identified it. It was a call for the bill. I had never the courage to cry it out loud. But I always attracted the pay-waiter's attention early and signalled to him with a discreet finger to draw near. When he came close enough—usually a good half-hour later—I would ask him gently for the bill. After a little practice I was able to limit my stay at a cafe to an hour and a half. But never have I been able to adjust myself to the loud repetition of an order throughout the room—just as in our *irani* shops here —before it was carried out. There was less of it in Vienna, than in parts of Germany.

The cafe proprietor is your host for eightpence. He always treats you as if his prosperity was closely bound up

W E S T O F S U E Z

with yours. At my hotel it was some time before I could convince the proprietor that vegetarians drank milk. There was a quaint little waiter who had, so he told me, fallen out with the cook because of a weakness for English puddings. The cook tasted his handiwork once and once only. But that had strained relations between them. Many Viennese jokes are built round food. At the Centre they told me of the Englishman who had announced that he had at last found a place where he could get good coffee—"as they make it in England."

CHAPTER XII

A BUDAPEST WEEK-END

A place that for all its colour and fragrance was somehow so thin, brittle and dream-like that it hardly seemed to have three dimensions.—*J. B. Priestley.*

The Budapest Municipality is very hospitable. Long before my train entered the station, I was approached by a smiling young man who asked me where I was going to stay. I did not know. He promptly handed me a little booklet telling me all about spending my money, with hotels graded in three sections according to rates. It contained a map and a list of tours arranged by Ibuz, the monopolist travel agency. What more can one want? Some one obviously to make up your mind for you. I found him.

I had bought a copy of the *Strand*, Coronation number, to while away the time. It lay on the seat beside me untouched as we passed along the Danube. My neighbour who was fidgeting in his seat, moved gently towards it. "Excuse me," he ventured, "may I look at this?" "Certainly," I replied. He looked at it. His interest flagged. Then he turned to me again.

"There," he said pointing across the river, "is Czech territory; this is Austrian, in a few minutes we reach Hungary. Is it not a shame?"

I thought rapidly. He must be Hungarian, I felt. But I tested my ground.

W E S T O F S U E Z

"Are the Hungarians," I asked, "like the Austrians?"

"No," he asserted swiftly, "they are better. Many of them are darker than you. The Austrians have fair hair; the Hungarians, black hair and dark eyes."

In ten minutes he had assumed a friendly interest in me. We had a long discussion on the hotel I was to stay in. He decided for the Bristol, I for the Hungary. We had an interesting encounter with the Customs man at the frontier. There was no checking up on the cigars and tobacco that I was taking. I asked why this was so. The official smiled and remarked drily, "You are coming from Germany. That is enough. German tobacco is not so good as Hungarian."

At Budapest my companion offered to lend me five pengos. I took the money offering to pay him in Austrian or English currency. He preferred to trust me for the amount and left his address. Then knowing, he said mournfully, the disadvantages attending the stranger in a foreign land, he took me to a taxi and put me in, telling the man to drive to the Hotel Bristol.

I offered him a lift. He accepted after a moment of hesitation. But he wanted to have me driven to my hotel first. Thinking better of it, he asked the driver to take me to the Hotel Hungary. I said that I would trust to his judgment and took the Bristol instead. At the hotel he came in and fixed up a room for me with the management, dismissed the taxi, told the hotel people to put the taxi charges to my account and said that he would go.

I took him aside and with considerable nervousness, asked him how much I should give him for the trouble I had put him to. He said he would not dream of taking anything, that he had done it out of pure friendship because Hungary was a place where foreigners are always cheated and he wanted me to have a good opinion of his country. I returned

A BUDAPEST WEEK-END'

his five pengos to him and he left me with his card and an offer to help me to see the city if I wanted to. He was, as I found later on, typically Hungarian.

I found this anxiety to make up for bad Hungarians a common trait, almost as common, in fact, as the pathetic question so often asked you, "Do I speak good English?" There are few people in the world better qualified to be good neighbours than the Hungarians. There are fewer people more afraid of failing in their duties to the stranger. I was not surprised to learn that the Jews had been welcomed in Hungary and especially in Budapest at times when they were persecuted elsewhere. But it was a shock to see that that tolerance was disappearing rapidly today. There is a strong anti-Semitic feeling in Hungary.

It was Saturday when I entered Budapest. My first care was to convert my tourist cheques into hard pengos. My hotel was by the Danube and after dinner that night I strolled out for a walk along the promenade. It was a fine night. The buildings on the other side of the river, in Buda, were floodlit. The promenade was deserted. Budapest is divided by the Danube in two parts : the more energetic Pest on the one side, and the sparkling Buda on the other.

I was stopped on my walk to the Suspension Bridge by a woman who wanted me to give her "ein cigarette." I had no cigarettes. Even if I had, it would have made no difference. After feeling foolish for ten minutes during which the young lady would not allow me to go forward, I pushed past to a little distance—to be stopped this time by a Frenchman who was stranded in Budapest and expected me to help him out because we both spoke English.

I thought that there was little prospect of my going alone for my walk and decided to have the Frenchman as the less of

W E S T O F S U E Z

two evils. Then I grew intensely conscious of a hundred and fifty pengos nestling in my hip-pocket. The Frenchman told me he was a dancer whose partner was left behind in Brussels; and to prove this he drew a much-handled photograph from his pocket and showed me a woman who must have danced, to be charitable, some twenty years ago. He asked me if I was new to Budapest. I said yes. He offered to take me to some very fine and "unusual" cabarets. I said, no, thanks. But he would not be shaken off.

After a long tale of woe in which his landlord figured as "the son of a dog" for having taken possession of his luggage and thrown him out for not paying his rent, my companion reverted to the cabaret, adding that he was dying to go to one. I told him that he was free to go if he liked and that I was sorry to keep him. "But," he said, "I have no monies." "Ah," I replied, "do not go." He looked at me in disgust. "You do not believe me?" he asked as he edged me to a dark corner of the promenade. I too had seen it and, to be frank, I was not exactly comfortable.

"Look here," I said, jingling a pengo and fifty filler in my trousers pocket, "I have on me just a pengo and a half. You do not believe me?" I queried as I drew the money out. He did not.

"Well," I said employing the capitalistic argument, "if you do not here it goes, back into the pocket."

"But what can I do with a pengo and a half?" he wailed. There were two men approaching and I picked up courage. "I can give you twenty filler," I said with an air of finality. He returned to his cabaret proposal, adding as extra attraction that there were lots of "gals."

Inspiration came on me. I laughed. "My good sir," I said, "I have come to Europe to run away from girls." He

A BUDAPEST WEEK-END

stepped back in surprise. "What," he asked me in an outraged tone. It was, I realized, an unusual tribute paid by the Orient to the West. Obviously he felt it was an undeserved one. I had to give it the face of truth. On the spur of the moment I built up an involved story of a man who had taken a long European tour to avoid a too persistent family of four quarreling wives. He roared with laughter. I said, "Yes, to you it is a joke. But for me—" I shook my head dolefully. He sobered down. He was not sure that he had heard me right.

"You married?" he asked and held up four fingers questioningly.

"Yes," said I unblushingly.

He led me to a seat and got the whole story out of me again. I showed him my passport with the visas and endorsements. He believed at last. When I left him on the seat he was still choking with laughter and he was content with twenty fillers. It was a lesson to me. When I next ventured out by night, I left all my money with the hotel reception clerk. It was safer that way.

II

Budapest, to turn from the frivolous to the political aspect, has two heroes, Signor Mussolini and the "noble Lord Rothermere." Lord Rothermere's propaganda for treaty revision has won Hungarian hearts; Signor Mussolini has played ally for his own purposes and has, I believe, gifted some monument to the city. For the rest, "it is better that we do not discuss politics."

There is no lack of monuments in Central Europe and, though Budapest is a comparatively young town, it has its full crop of them. The millennium memorial is the most spectacular, a memorial to Hungarian kings with statues and allegorical figures, topped by an image of the archangel Gabriel.

W E S T O F S U E Z

We did the museums in a quaint group on Monday. There were eighteen who knew German, two who were apparently Hungarian provincials, one Frenchwoman, and two who spoke English—a woman from the United States of America and myself. The guide who had seen us safely through the monuments, the squares and the churches, was stuck at the museums. She—it was the first woman guide I have seen—spoke all the four languages fluently and English extremely well. I was lost in admiration of her quadri-lingual efforts. In fact I derived a good deal of amusement out of the guiding. With the German group she was serious, informing and precise. With the Frenchwoman she had established almost a family relationship. With us who knew English, she was light, casual and almost humorous. The Hungarians she treated with sublime contempt as country cousins of no worth.

I had my guide-book and did not need much help. I offered to assist the American. But she refused. She thought the guide knew more than my book, was angry that she said more in German than in English. I tried in vain to persuade her that German was less concise than English.

Outside Admiral Horthy's residence, we watched with amusement the exaggerated steps of the sentry on parade. Then we joined the crowd on either side of the road to wait for a procession which took long to come. Our guide in despair collected us and away we drove to the Fishermen's Bastion and the other sights we had yet to see.

The most worthwhile memorial was one built not so much by man as gifted by nature. It was in a way my discovery and I doubt very much whether I would have discovered it anywhere except among the kindly Hungarians. —

There is a hill called John's Hill beyond Buda. I reached it by accident. I took the funicular railway, a train run on

A BUDAPEST WEEK-END

cogged wheels to a point the name of which I forget. There when I got off, I saw a shaded road and I took it for a quiet stroll. Hardly had I walked for twenty minutes, when a car passed me and stopped twenty yards away. As I went past it, I was stopped. There was an old woman in it and she was busy handing some bundles over to the driver in front. She asked me if I was making for John's Hill, pointing to a hill which held a monument on it across the valley. I said that I did not know. She replied at once that I should see it since I had come so far and that it would take me an hour and a half to get there. I raised my hat, thanked her and moved forward.

She called me back. She would, she said, be glad to take me there. I hesitated. "You need not pay," she said at once with a smile that robbed the remark of its sting. I said I was not thinking of that but whether I should go at all. I had bought a ticket for a city tour and I was due at 2-30. It was near 11. She was definite that John's Hill was worth all the city tours. I got in.

She was, she told me, selling embroideries in Pest to foreign visitors and so she knew English a little. She had a little shop at the foot of the hill, where there was the inevitable restaurant. She would not hear of my paying the taxi or bearing part of the cost. I was her "guest" at John's Hill. I helped her with her bundles, the least I could do, wished her good-morning and good luck and took the road to the top.

There there was a simple monument to Empress Elizabeth, wife of Franz Joseph. The Empress Elizabeth is a strange figure among the Hapsburgs. The Hungarians who detested old Franz Joseph as a tyrant and a foreign one at that, had a warm affection for her. It makes one seriously wonder whether the Hungarian objection to the Austrian Empire was really political and racial, after all. The memorial at St. John's

W E S T O F S U E Z

Hill bears testimony to their regard for the Empress. The spot, I was told, was chosen because it was particularly dear to her.

I managed to make myself just understood by a visitor there who conveyed to me that I could go to the top without hurting anyone's susceptibilities. He came halfway with me and left abruptly. From the top I had a beautiful view of Budapest and its neighbourhood. Just as I was contemplating a descent, a young man ran up to meet me. He had been told by the woman at the stall and by the old man that I was at the memorial and he had come to use this opportunity to speak English. He was a student and he earned a living by teaching English to the waiters at the restaurant. He lunched with me, an extremely reluctant guest. And then he showed me the tablet set up in the garden to the Prince of Wales. It was in the form of a Union Jack with the words, "Here the beauties of Budapest were revealed to H. R. H. the Prince of Wales on....."

We departed from the hill by a short-cut, a short-cut which brought my heart to my mouth at every second step. When I parted from my companion it was 2-30; when I reached my hotel I was ten minutes late and my hotel clerk was extremely distressed at the delay. "Would I miss the tourist bus?" I inquired. Oh, no, he would fix that up. I reached the square from which the buses left. The tourists were all waiting for me, the Anglo-Saxon element extremely peeved.

Our guide told me that he had been informed by the hotel on the telephone that an Indian gentleman was just coming and he had waited. He was a Margrave who had taken to guiding in picturesque costume; and he was an old fox. He implemented his earnings by photographs of himself in costume which he "presented" to the tourists. He referred aggressively to his countrymen as "we Orientals." He had a fascinatingly genteel way of receiving tips. The Hungarian Parliament is

A BUDAPEST WEEK-END

a modern building beautifully situated. I was surprised to see the plaques on the desks of distinguished Hungarian statesmen who had died recently. An extremely uncomfortable reminder to present occupants of the seats. Like Holland, Hungary respects the cigars of its legislators by providing "parking place" for them. After the others left, I sat with the guide on a bench by the Danube and he told me how he was related to King Edward VII distantly—oh, so distantly—but it counted with some tourists. When an American lady approached us, he jumped up, kissed her hand and asked her if she was not going to the Coronation. He told me later that she knew of his high connections.

At the court of King Edward VII, he said, the king of the "gypsies" had been present on some occasion and he had told my guide when he came back that tall dark men with fine beards and turbans were there talking together and he had understood a few words. The Margrave said that Indians were related to the gypsies and so "the gypsy King" had recognised a few words. In his guiding he referred to Attila almost as an ancestor and traced the name of Buda to the elder brother of Attila who had fallen on the site and who was known as Buda. I told him the word might have meant "old man" as it does in India. He somehow felt I knew all about it and accepted the explanation announcing it as authentic. Whether it be in Nazi Germany or in Gypsy Hungary, it is good to know you have "relatives" in a strange place.

III.

I did very much what other tourists do and I was impressed both by the linguistic attainments of the guides and by the common illusion that Hungary had thrown off Muslim influence saving European civilization by the act. Budapest is more than half-Moorish, it seems to me. The buildings bear witness to that—and the baths.

W E S T O F S U E Z

I did the round of the baths with Mr. John Varady of Kurkomanmission a man who knows fourteen languages. Baths and sulphur springs are Budapest's great attraction for the foreign visitor. After a taste of water from one spring, I was astonished at the lengths to which men would go for health's sake. It is possible that the persons indulging in both bath and drink, are far more desperate than most men. But to me there seemed little wrong with them except too much leisure and I doubt whether they ever leave the baths for more energetic work. There was only one man who would, I think, have benefited by a season here and that was an actor.

Varady had a romantic soul. He was a great admirer of Hungarian women—from a distance. This was, he said, because Hungarian women though good to look at are, like the streamlined automobile, difficult to maintain. I was shown an actress, hailed as the Marlene Dietrich of Budapest. Slimming, I concluded, was no craze with Hungarians on the stage, though Hungarian women as a rule are tall and slim. The law of opposites works even in the theatre.

I was recommended at my hotel to go to a play then on, "The Empress Josephine." I was doubtful of the entertainment value of the performance, especially when I learnt that the manager of the hotel was a friend and admirer of the leading lady. As a matter of fact it was quite good and the acting was very natural. All the women acting in the piece had extraordinarily shrill voices which somehow got under your skin. This increased their carrying power, even when they were soft-spoken. I had to express intense gratitude to the manager the next day for his advice. He was kind enough to come up and inquire about it. The hotel had for the benefit of its guests a little shop at the entrance for the sale of embroidered cloth. The girl in charge was persistent that I

A BUDAPEST WEEK-END

should buy something and I purchased my liberty as cheaply as I could.

Music is a passion in Budapest. Various bands, more or less—rather less than more—gypsy, perform for the benefit of the tourists. If you are appreciative or unusual enough, the violinist will draw near and play the instrument in your ear. Twice I escaped this doubtful distinction. I had been told in Prague (where there is, I suspect, some jealousy at the bottom) that it was not by accident that the best reputation for music and for the treatment of ear diseases goes to Vienna.

There are gypsies of all ages performing. But there is so little to distinguish them from the non-gypsies that one becomes extremely doubtful of their origin. I decided one night to do the tourist trip to the Budapest night clubs. Everything depended on there being enough men to do the trip. As I sat in the office waiting for the others to turn up, I found no prospect of making the required number. An Englishwoman dashed in five minutes late. The guide held a hurried consultation with a clerk in the office. Then he turned to us. He was prepared to take us round in a taxi. My companion seemed inexplicably perturbed at the thought. She told me that I was quite safe because she was a respectable married woman. I rejoined that she was even safer as I had a strong social reform puritan tradition to live up to.

We did the cafes and discussed British novels through the night. My guide looked bored to death. I was amazed to find the respectable married woman an admirer of D. H. Lawrence. She was pleased to see me appreciative of his books. Attempts on my part to turn the conversation to J. B. Priestley seemed to be all so many short-cuts to D. H. Lawrence. She did not like Priestley. I asked her at a night-club why people came to these places. She thought it was to be amused. A look round

W E S T O F S U E Z

convinced her that the club was not having the desired effect. I was told by my guide that the women and the men in all the cabarets were Jews. He pointed out a number of men and women to me as Jews who were not Jews as we found later. But that did not worry him. He knew that most of the places were run by Jews. When Hungary starts on its anti-Semitic campaign, Nazi Germany will seem a Hebrew dream come true to most people.

My departure was ignominious. I started badly by being driven to the wrong station. Then I nearly missed the train in getting my tickets from Prague to Budapest *via* Warsaw carcelled. But I was in time after all ; or rather the train was late by a few minutes.

The good and the bad came to me in equal measure. For instance, it took me days to teach my hotel steward what vegetarianism really meant. My explanation, "no fish, no flesh," was taken to include brain cutlets in my dietary. I ate brain cutlets on the first night and, after doing it, protested. The next day, my rice was decorated with chopped up ham. I think that rice by itself is not known to the Hungarians. Then when I had settled everything to my comfort, the question arose of the fat in which the whole food was cooked. It happened to be butter but it might as well have been lard. Ultimately the waiters understood—the day before I left—and they concluded that I was a sick man in quest of health. No personal discomfort, however, can affect my regard for this very human and extremely loveable people.

CHAPTER XIII

A SOUTH GERMAN MISCELLANY

The Rhine.....with that wonderful voice which speaks of death and life, of chivalry and greed of gold.—*Michael Fairless.*

Munich on the day I reached it, was like a sucked orange. It was in the first place May 2, when everybody in a German town is getting over the official rejoicings of May Day. And then again it was a Sunday. I deposited my luggage at the station and, after a preliminary stroll on the main street, I decided for a shave before undertaking any formidable enterprise. The shops, however, were all closed and I returned to the station. I have never before had reason to thank my innate, sometimes irrepressible, aversion to shaving myself.

The station hair-cutting section seemed to abound in barbers. There were, as far as I could make out, twelve little rooms fitted up with barbers' chairs and barbers complete. All twelve had customers. There was a long waiting list. As I walked into the lounge, I noticed a cheerful-looking man before me. He needed, I thought, a shave even more than I did. I was given a card-board rectangle with a number on it. The one who preceded me, was divesting himself of his overcoat. Suddenly he caught sight of me and his smile widened. I responded feebly. "You are Indische?" he asked confidently. "Yes," I replied. He was, he told me, Professor Aufhauser, Professor of Indology in Munich University. "Wait here for me," he said as he dived into a barber's compartment.

W E S T O F S U E Z

My number was called out. Another neighbour peeped into my card, very much as one would peep into one's opponent's hand at bridge, and signalled to me to go on without fear. The barber to whom I was assigned, readily understood my gestures and I settled down to a quiet fifteen minutes disturbed by an occasional nerve-jangling as the barber overestimated the growth on my chin. Mass-shaving as it seems to exist in Munich, must be a strain on the best of barbers and mine was certainly not the best.

I have given fair trial to the barbers of four different countries in ten different towns; and it is not patriotism that makes me say, there is none to beat or even equal the Indian expert who might be hard on your nose and ears when he performs, but is gentle with the razor.

When I came out I found the Professor waiting patiently. From his appearance and his unconcern I concluded that the Munchener is tougher than most men. The Professor took me out and kept me company till his bus came. He took the opportunity to invite me to tea the next day, and I gratefully accepted. Unfortunately for me, he could suggest no places to visit except the University. He seemed all that a Professor ought to be and, if he was as devoted to his subject as he was careless of things around him unconnected with Indology, Munich must be having a great asset.

I had occasion to do Munich thoroughly before visiting the Professor. The architecture is massive, the gardens well laid out, the monuments elaborate and there is a plethora of fountains. Time and inclination were against my visiting the museums, but I spent a good part of my day in the parks, walking along the Isar and in locating my two landmarks— one of them a memorial to young Nazis who had fallen in the early days of party struggle; the other, I do not know what, also

A S O U T H G E R M A N M I S C E L L A N Y

recognisable by the Nazi salute which passers-by unfailingly gave it. The first was near the Brown House, the second near the University.

Munich seems for several reasons better fitted to be the capital of Germany than Berlin. It has for one thing grown rather than been built. Berlin might be imposing but it cannot be beautiful. Munich has an unquestioned grandeur about it. It has a life of its own and as a capital it has possibilities of forming an international centre while preserving its national characteristics. Berlin ceases to be national where it is international, and where it is German (Prussian would be more correct), it is so to the exclusion of wider and larger interests. At any rate that was how it struck me. There seemed no reason why Berlin should be the capital of the German Republic, except that the old Emperors wished it so and the Republic has inherited it from the empire.

I lodged the night in the Hotel Metropole near the station. When I saw the Professor at his flat the next day, I was able to tell him I had seen a good bit of his city. He told me that he was due to visit India in August. He took me to the University with him and, after showing me the Library, he said he had a lecture to deliver, but that I could go round and have a look. The first door I reached led me on to the road and I took the line of least resistance. In another hour and a half I was on my way to Nuremberg.

On Monday night (May 3) I was in Nuremberg. Luckily there were representatives from the various hotels at the station and, catching a man who offered a room for two marks and fifty, I surrendered him my bags and followed him. The others shouted to me that his hotel was ten minutes from the station instead of the three he had given me to understand. I ate at a vegetarian restaurant, and missed my way back. I reached my

W E S T O F S U E Z

hotel at eleven that night. It was too late for anything but sleep.

"On leaving the imposing Central Station buildings," says Schrag's 'Handy Guide to Nuremberg,' "the first object to catch the eye is the monument (unveiled in 1901) of the late Prinz-Regent Luitpold by Professor Von Ruemann." I left the building from three different exits without catching sight of the monument. The Prinz-Regent must have been a very worthy fellow to have deserved a colossal monument just in front of the railway station. But the monument had not lasted more than a generation.

I was told that it had been removed to a more prominent place in some other city. My guide-book was two years old. It struck me as a good idea, even though temporarily embarrassing to the tourist. If each generation starts by toppling the gods of the earlier one from their pedestals, it is essential that statues should not be regarded as sacrosanct. Some material, less lasting than brass, should be found for monuments. The progress from nomad to civilised man is marked by a transition from permanent memorials and temporary houses to temporary monuments and concrete buildings.

Nuremberg has many charms for those who like ruins. Its attractions to the Nazi are the accessible open spaces which can be turned into stadiums and meeting grounds for party assemblies and mass demonstrations. Coming out of the station with the obsolete guide-book I met Ali-Akbar, a young Indian who runs a hotel in London. He was waiting for a tram. He told me that he would show me all over Nuremberg and, as he knew German, I accepted his offer. Our first visit was to the huge Nazi party field. From there we returned by tram and walked along the city wall to the castle from which one had a beautiful view of the old town. After strolling down various streets and

A S O U T H G E R M A N M I S C E L L ' A N Y

viewing monuments marked out in the guide-book, he declared that there was nothing more to see except the "Mauthalle." This was an enormous structure which had served in turn as monastery, granary, customs house and was, now in a commercial age, leased out to shops. There was a beer cellar below, which was furnished in monastic simplicity.

In Nuremberg both Ali-Akbar and myself were perfect adventurers. We had between us twenty-six marks. This was due to my folly. Leaving Vienna I had equipped myself with just forty marks, twenty of which I had already spent. I was forced by the terms of my tickets to stay another six days in Germany. I was, if anything, the better off, since I had my tickets. Ali-Akbar had to buy his yet. But then he had friends in South Germany. At the station he said that as his train left at 4-30 and mine at 3-30, he would see me off first. But as it happened, my train had left at 2-30. I loaned him four marks, and he promised that he would send me a pound or twenty marks as a return loan to Frankfurt. After I had settled my hotel bill and redeemed my luggage I had ten marks to see me through to Frankfurt. He persuaded me to take his train.

This involved a rather tedious approach to Heidelberg, my next stop. I was to change at Crailsheim, and to stop the night at Heilbronn. I had to wait for nearly two hours at Crailsheim for the train to Heilbronn. And the train was slow. But I felt it was worth it. The scenery between Crailsheim and Heilbronn is varied and exceedingly picturesque. One little station, Halle, attracted me and, if I had more marks on me, I would have dropped out there. From Halle to Heilbronn I was alone and in my anxiety to get out, I forgot that Heilbronn was the terminus station for this train and nearly descended a station earlier. Five

W E S T O F S U E Z

more minutes and I was out in search of a hotel. The Kronprinz caught my eye. I stayed there the night and after an early breakfast and an exploratory walk, I took the morning train to Heidelberg. I can recommend Heilbronn and the Hotel Kronprinz to anyone who wants a quiet ten days. The bread was almost up to Vienna standard, the jam up to English and the butter had not the oily appearance which butter in Berlin had when I was there. And it took only three and a half marks out of me. I reached Heidelberg with six marks on me and a few pounds on my letter of credit.

Heidelberg, I had been told, was worth a two-hour visit. I planned to leave in three. As I had not the money for it, I left the city bus behind and walked to the main places. It was two hours later that I reached the Castle. When I had inspected the Great Cask in the Castle (the little city was known for this 'monument' to the drinking capacity of its aristocracy), I found that there was no time to get my train to Frankfurt. So I walked back to the Old Bridge, then up Schlangenweg, a narrow winding footpath uphill all the way, to Philosophenweg. This is a beautiful walk, a walk of which I at any rate would not tire for months. But it plays havoc on an empty stomach. Back I went to the station. Near by was a baker's shop. For thirty pfennigs I bought a large supply of black bread. Another thirty bought me butter and cheese. I went back to the Philosophenweg which I desecrated by eating a hungry man's lunch. There is a place marked sacred to Bismarck higher up. Before the climb there is a milk kiosk. I refreshed myself at the kiosk and went up. Came down again and tackled another glass of milk. Never have I enjoyed my food as I did then. On my way to the station I passed a milk restaurant. Another glass of milk and I was prepared for anything. In fact I had overeaten. And I had four marks still on me. Heidelberg was

A SOUTH GERMAN MISCELLANY

cheap to visit. I was early for my train. My next station was Frankfurt.

II.

I decided after consulting my guide-book to lodge at Farig's Hotel Bristol in Frankfurt. This was a strange decision. The hotel is not for those who have just a balance of four marks on them. But I was tired of economy and made for the hotel. Unfortunately, the banks were closed on the next day, Thursday May 6, and it was too early to expect Ali-Akbar's remittance. I told the hotel clerk to put everything on the bill. My first step was to get in touch with Herr Wreigel (I think that was his name), who was the Director of the I. G. Factory, an enterprise for the manufacture of synthetic articles from rubber tyres to jewellery.

Herr Wreigel was out of town and I could only see him on Friday. I tried to telephone to his suburban residence but did not get him. I posted a letter to him ultimately which reached him. He rang me up and said he would be able to see me on Friday. I told him on the telephone that I planned to be in Cologne on Friday night and would, therefore, miss him. Then my money held me up. I received a letter from Herr Wreigel on Friday morning that he would have me met in two hours. At 9-30 his car called for me. Herr Wreigel knew my mind better even than I did. Certainly he seemed to know that I had not left Frankfurt.

I was taken over the factories and workers' residences of the firm by Mr. R. Seyd who had been in India often. He was extraordinarily capable in restricting the enthusiasm of officers in charge of the various sections to giving me a bare outline of the work done by them. I thanked him once when he told the physicians in charge of the emergency wards that the detailed description would be far above my head. He

W E S T O F S U E Z

was just a little bit taken aback because he knew I did not understand German. I explained to him that his face was very expressive and so were his hands. The building which houses this immense enterprise is a modern palace. I had lunch with the men who had taken me round.

In going through the houses for workers, Mr. Syed took me to a typical working class flat provided at low rent for its employees. I was hesitating to enter one of the rooms when he said that I should not be nervous as German customs were freer than Indian. He then turned to the woman inside and said that in India the men not only did not like to have their rooms looked over but in conservative circles even kept their women in purdah. I wanted to know what had passed and he told me.

At my request he explained to her that I had no such scruples, but that I disliked intruding on the privacy of people. Even if the German working men and women were anxious to show me their bedroom and their kitchen, I said, I did not wish to see it. We had a little discussion afterwards, Mr. Syed and I, on this attitude which he felt convinced was but a shadow of the old prejudice. I told him that if I paid a visit to his house, I would not dream of asking to see his kitchen and his bedroom; and I did not see why I should do so where there was a possibility of compliance from a fear that I was accompanied by a high official of the Company. But he told me the German worker under the Nazi regime was proud of what had been done for him and was anxious to show his gains to everyone.

This was followed by the inevitable argument on dictatorship and democracy. He was annoyed because I insisted on giving the German rule "the bad name of dictatorship." It was a natural circumstance that one should lead the rest and he cited the birds of the air and the beasts. He adroitly put me on the defensive by asking me what the difference was

A SOUTH GERMAN MISCELLANY

between German respect and love for Hitler and Indian reverence for Gandhiji. I gave him several but he dismissed them all as differences due to political conditions.

Every democracy, he urged, had to subordinate the will of the people to the better judgment of one outstanding man. Germany under Hitler was a real democracy. England he did not regard as democratic. I could not agree with him on the classification of the Hitler regime as a democracy, but I met him half-way by accepting that not every state ruled by a parliament was democratic.

The discussion nearly led to my staying one more day in Frankfurt for the banks were within five minutes of closing when I reached them to cash a couple of pounds off my credit letter. That and the twenty marks that came on Friday evening from Ali-Akbar saw me through the Frankfurt period, leaving me again with six marks and a craze for economy, when I got to Mainz.

I have not, however, quite done with Frankfurt. I was not with Herr Wreigel's men all the time. The first evening I walked through the town on a preliminary inspection. I noted for a second visit the two synagogues (magnificent structures), the house of the first Rothschild, and the Romer; and I left Goethe House for a later day. The next day I did the town thoroughly, even hunting up streets which had been renamed aryanly since the guide-book was published.

The name of Borne was once a revered one in Frankfurt, enough at any rate to have a square, a road and a memorial bust to him. Now the square has been absorbed by another square adjacent to it; the road named after a shorter continuation road, and the bust removed from the public place. The foundation and the pedestal of the bust, but not the inscription,

W E S T O F S U E Z

were still visible and distinguishable when I reached the place in my search at eight on Thursday night. The house of the first Rothschild takes time to pick out. But then that is equally true of even Goethe's House which I found only on Friday. The difference lies in this: Even men who are not highbrow, rather the reverse, look on you with admiration and respect, even affection, if you ask the way to Goethe's House.

People should feel the destruction of monuments and memorials less than the destruction of property and the persecution of living men and women. Yet the former brings home the petty ruthlessness of anti-Semitism more than anything else could. To be frank, I had come almost to a point when I could understand, even if I did detest, the German action against the Jews. There was nothing, however, to justify this thorough attempt to efface all forms of recognition of Jewish civic contributions. I told this to Mr. Seyd at the I. G. works and said I was surprised that a nation which had earned a name for itself as thorough, should still sell guide-books which were lasting monuments to Frankfurt Jews.

In the older part of Frankfurt, the streets are exceedingly narrow. The top storeys of houses across the streets come very close to one another. Quarrels between neighbours then were no doubt more politely conducted than now when a twenty feet road separates you from the outside world; making up too was equally easy, since one could shake hands across the street without danger of toppling out or, even if one did, without danger of hurting oneself. The cafes were all humming with excitement, and skating demonstrations and music drew crowds round them.

The menace of the cameraman is greater in Frankfurt than in other cities. I was looking admiringly at a colossal statue of Bismarck when I heard a shout behind me. Turning round

A SOUTH GERMAN MISCELLANY

to see what had happened, I was surprised to find a young fellow with a camera on me. He tried long and earnestly to sell me what he had taken but I refused determinedly. He said that he had spent a film on it. I told him it was his own fault. My obstinacy drew a crowd and I was afraid I would be involved in a public scene but it was apparently only interest in my method of tackling a common problem; for when I left there was general laughter at the discomfited man.

The Romer is now the Town Hall or rather the Museum part of it. It is a historic building for the German Emperors from the eighth to the nineteenth century were crowned in it. I had to don felt over-slippers before entering the banqueting hall of the Emperors, to protect—and polish—the wooden floor. Portraits of the Emperors decorate the walls. The room is small—that is for a banqueting hall—and the windows at which the crowned Emperors were wont to show themselves to the people, command a pleasing view of the town as it is meet they should. I was admiring the imperial portraits—and dressing them mentally in modern clothes to obtain a better appreciation of the imperial faces—when two little girls came skating down the floor to halt perilously near the portrait of Charlemagne. More children dashed up.

The whole batch of them stopped near me and looked at me with the unfeigned interest which strangers invariably evoke, and not only in children. The first two came nearer, scrutinised me closely and smiled. They followed me from picture to picture, I was growing exceedingly self-conscious when the two girls spoke directly to me. We could not make ourselves understood to each other, beyond an explanation from me that I was from India. In the adjacent Electors' room one of them plucked up enough courage to come to one side of me and hold my hand.

A group of old Germans just entering the room looked at us all and smiled encouragingly. One of them came up and

W E S T O F S U E Z

tried to talk. I did not understand him. The girl by my side explained that I was from India, adding perhaps, a curiosity she had discovered. He bowed to me, smiled and left. As I walked out of the Romer, I saw the children behind me. It was, I felt, a position which only the Pied Piper could have solved. But as I walked briskly away, I was relieved to see over my shoulder the kids standing before the Town Hall, waving me farewell. I waved back.

There were not many visitors at Goethe's House when I went there. But doubtless that was because it was within an hour of closing time. The room in which Goethe was born; his father's study, the little room where he staged his first puppet show, which he describes in "Wilhelm Meister;" all these served to bring a living picture of the illustrious German. In the little Museum attached to the house, there were busts of Goethe and sheets of manuscripts preserved by the Trust. It is a small house of two storeys and we were shown the window at which the poet's father sat watching for his son's return. The guide realistically told us that Goethe who disliked being caught returning late, used to sneak in from the other side of the street. My last "engagement" in Frankfurt was the visit to Goethe House.

III.

I was in Mainz on Friday evening. I made for the riverside. By a mysterious dispensation of the guide-book authorities, small towns are written up better than the big ones. Mainz was renowned as the place where German Kings rested at night on their way to the crowning of the Emperors in Frankfurt. Today it is the point from which the most fascinating part of the Rhine trip is undertaken downstream. Since Indian rivers flow down from the North it took some time for me to give the Rhine its due.

A SOUTH GERMAN MISCELLANY

It did not take me long to explore Mainz. And as there was only a short nine hours to pass before morning and my first boat to Cologne, I decided to spend it along the Rhine. But nine hours can be long on a cold night. At midnight I tired of pacing up and down the still riverbank. I crossed over to Mainz-Kastel, on the other side of the Rhine. Suddenly I thought of the station waiting-room, forgetting it was a German town. In Germany you cannot sit doing nothing in a waiting-room. You must order something to eat or drink. Just as it struck me that it was absurd to stay out when I could as well sleep at a hotel—and damn the expense—the waiter came over and asked me if I wanted anything more. No, I replied.

"Have you no hotel to go to?" he queried.

"Of course, I have," I replied; "but I do not know how to reach it."

"What hotel?"

This was more difficult to answer. I hit on the Reichpost which I had passed three times that evening. He directed me to it. I went in and fixed a room for myself.

Saturday morning was a gloomy day. There was a slight drizzle. Worse than the weather the faces of the people around me were steeped in gloom. The news had come through that the "Hindenburg" had been destroyed. You do not need to know the language to realise that people are labouring under a national calamity.

My landlady at the Reichpost had visions of prosperity ushered in by one Indian who was well impressed. My breakfast was substantial. That it was not more so was due to my vegetarianism. She produced photographs of her departed husband over which we made appropriate clucking noises, and requested me to speak well of her hotel. She was much distressed by her employees and asked me if servants were lazy and

W E S T O F S U E Z

unenterprising in India. I tactfully told her the problem of employer and servant was much the same everywhere. The small establishment came out to wave me good-bye. At the bank I dropped another pound. The relativity laws governing the German Exchange led me into misleading economies. Shortage of cash with me was shortage of marks and a reluctance to convert sterling at an unfavourable rate.

If to the devout Hindu the waters of the Ganges bring purification of his sins, to the German the Rhine fulfils a similar useful service. All cares seem to vanish on board the boats which navigate the Rhine. I had secured a seat by myself and the boat was full of Nazi Brown Shirts and of young women who were going to a station a couple of hours down the river.

In Germany it is the young who travel most, unlike in the British Isles where only the old seem to have time for sight-seeing. I had had the privilege of hearing the songs of the Rhine sung one evening at the house of Quaker friends in Berlin. Now I heard them again in the right setting. At first it was a pleasant blend of voices with both the men and women taking equal part. Then the voices of the men soared high above the others and finally the women tired out and the air was heavy with the noise of revelry. This too corresponded with the consumption of wine which seemed pretty heavy. I was then and then only able to see why few people have done the Rhine at one stretch. The cost would be prohibitive.

The scenery was magnificent on either side — a good exercise for the muscles of the neck. Binoculars were freely borrowed and lent and returned. There was a spirit of friendliness which seemed almost overwhelming. Nazi Brown Shirts travelled a few stations beyond the party of girls. They lost interest in singing as soon as they saw the

A SOUTH GERMAN MISCELLANY

women off the boat. One of them came up to me and attempted conversation.

We found an interpreter, a young German who had married a French lady and was travelling on the boat with her. He told me that the others wanted to know why I was solemn on a Rhine trip when everyone should be gay. I replied that it was lack of knowledge of the language. I was invited to join the party of drinkers and when I said I was a teetotaller, I was offered milk or mineral water. I refused the offer.

Seeking for some way in which I could contribute to the party, I hit upon palm reading. It was eagerly accepted. The interpreter had a hard time of it. He told me later that I was different from other palmists he had seen for I varied my readings with each man. I gave him my secret. I read palms from the faces of the men before me. A few lucky guesses, one of them about the marriage of a young man within the next eight months, which he said was absolutely correct, established my reputation. I read the hand of the interpreter to the satisfaction of his wife; and her hand to his satisfaction. The best tribute I received was the reluctance of the interpreting party to translate his fortune for the benefit of the others. One old lady came up to me after the others had moved away to discuss me among themselves, and shyly asked in broken English if I was a real palmist. She was afraid of hurting my pride. I said that I was a fraud which surprised her considerably.

From Mainz to Coblenz, the river winds its way between hills most of them crowned by an old fortress, a church or a castle. Where the hand of man could not build, the mind had conceived great legends like the Lorelei immortalised by Heine in song and still sung in Germany, I was told, as an old folksong by an unknown author. For Heinrich Heine was a Jew.

W E S T O F S U E Z

From Coblenz the river passes through mountainous regions for a space and then emerges into more open country and here lies the Industrial Rhineland; then into the suburban residences; and right into the city of Cologne. It was a strange transition, an index to centuries of progress from the simple to the complex. From the sleepy towns where the only industry was the making of wines, to the great manufacturing centres producing all the accessories of civilisation. We had a striking example of the change. The Brown Shirts got off at Coblenz. For an hour we had peace. Then came a party of industrial workers on a holiday organised by the Kraft durch Freude. They came on with ear-splitting musical instruments.

The leader was a coarse-looking fellow, his most striking equipment a monocle. His looks were not his fault; his manners were. He was, he knew it, a born leader. He led the rest in singing, he conducted the band and delivered short speeches. He called on all of us to be silent that he might be the more noisy. He took a dislike to the gentleman who had acted interpreter earlier in the day, because, I sensed, his wife wore a fur coat. And those two were no better mixers than I was.

It was after they had got out that he came to me generously bringing with him two glasses of beer. When I said that I did not drink, he was unworried and he finished both glasses. He said he knew a "leetle" English. He asked me if I was a doctor. I told him that I was a journalist. He told me then that I should write well of Hitler and particularly of the Kraft durch Freude. He presented me with a first of May badge pinning it like a decoration on the lapel of my coat. I was glad when I bade farewell to him and his party a few stations before Cologne.

It was late in the evening when I came to Cologne. It was late that night when I left Cologne for Brussels.

A S O U T H G E R M A N M I S C E L L A N Y

I had time only for the great Cathedral, a massive structure grand in its simplicity. My education, I freely admit, has been incomplete—not to say misdirected. Had I spent half the time that I did on foreign exchange and the gold standard without mastering the elements of these abstruse subjects, on the more lasting study of art and architecture, I could now describe the impression produced on me by the Cologne Cathedral in adequate language.

The Cathedral was planned nearly seven centuries ago but it has suffered many vicissitudes before reaching its present dignity. For three hundred years men laboured at it and then gave it up for lack of funds. In 1796 the French used it as a storehouse for hay. And now it is barely sixty years since it was completed according to the original plans. Seven hundred years is a long time but it was well worth it to have the Cologne Cathedral.

CHAPTER XIV

A MINIATURE PARIS

"Can you tell me something?" said a poor forlorn Englishman in a whisper in Florence. "The people are so ill-natured I don't like to ask them. Where is it they keep the Medical Venus?"—*Anthony Trollope.*

My train to Brussels was due a little after 11 that night. As I waited on the platform I noticed, not with any great pleasure, a party of Englishmen apparently travelling the same way. This would necessarily mean a crowded train and I had looked forward to a good sleep in the carriage. However, I prepared to scramble for a seat and by the simple device of avoiding the crowd and making for the least crowded carriage door, I found myself at a three-seater compartment.

There had come up from the other side an English sportsman with golf-clubs and all complete, who stood at the door and looked in with me. I asked him if he thought the compartment might have been reserved. He was startled at the question and looked aghast at the stranger who had had the impertinence to address him. He mumbled something which I did not catch. Probably he was as much in the dark as I was. Anyway that settled the matter. He was certainly not the rightful—lessee, shall we say? I walked in and placed my typewriter on the corner seat, going out again for my other luggage. As I passed out I saw the rival claimant glaring at me. He was too polite, however, to speak to an absolute stranger. And now I had a distant look in my eye.

A MINIATURE PARIS

When I came back with the rest of my luggage there was a new problem confronting me. Two women had come in and taken the other two seats. Now there is only one thing that terrifies me more than the officials and men in authority and that is the dread in foreign lands that I might enter into a compartment, enclosure, room, or what you will, reserved for women. Fortunately this is a rare thing in Europe.

When I saw the two women seated snugly in the carriage and, even more when I heard them grumbling in English at the presence of a third person in the train, I rushed to the conclusion that my evil star was ascendant. I did not like to consult them for they were, after all, interested parties and might conceivably misrepresent things. I walked round the wagon several times and assured myself that there was nothing sacred about the carriage.

I returned and settled into my corner when the grumbling began all over again. I waited for a time ; then it was too much for me when one of them said that but for "the third seat being taken up" they could have had a good night. It was, I now realise it, no fault of theirs that this discussion took place in my presence. How could they know that a traveller in a German train would know enough English to understand them ? At the time, however, I felt it was unreasonable, to say the least, to have a grievance against a man who had but bought his ticket and occupied a seat.

I turned to them and said that I was extremely sorry to have inconvenienced them like this ; that they could have the whole compartment to themselves for all I cared, as it was immaterial to me whether I slept in the train or stood in the corridor for the short journey I was making; and that, if they wanted, I would even move my luggage out of the compartment. As I said this, I got up.

W E S T O F S U E Z

It had an instant effect. Both of them now exclaimed that they were not troubled by my presence in the least ; that, as I had been in first, I was quite within my rights in staying there; and that they saw no reason for my going out when there was plenty of room in the compartment. I replied a little ungraciously that there were few things less pleasant than to be compelled to pass one's time with persons who had a grievance. In five minutes from this I was asleep only to wake with the arrival of the Customs checkers. I decided not to get up and try if it would see me through. "And this," said one of my neighbours to the other, "is the man who was not going to sleep." The Customs man did rouse me after all.

After this the women finding the train unsleepable, entered into a long discussion with me on various subjects. Unfortunately we touched on the British abdication. And it would happen that the two in my carriage should be ardent admirers of Earl (then Mr.) Baldwin. In a heated controversy in which none of us convinced the other, we reached Brussels. As I got down, I forgot my binoculars which travelled down to Ostend.

It was early when I came to Brussels, about six in the morning on May 9. A porter took me to the Hotel de Rhin by the station. I asked the hotel attendant for a map but he had none. I asked him when breakfast would be ready and he said near eight o'clock. I decided to investigate the town. The first place I passed was the botanical gardens. Then from there I walked to the memorial to the Unknown Soldier. This is a simple monument with a fire burning before it continuously. The monument is topped by a statue of the late King Albert.

Where I went next I can describe better than name. I passed the palace, the court of justice, the various legations and then walking on I came to a huge monument which looked quite near but receded as I approached it. The fact was that there was

A MINIATURE PARIS

a dip in the road and I had misjudged the distance. It was, I gathered, a monument to the union of the several provinces of Belgium. Round this the area, I found, was rich in monuments. There was the memorial tablet to the heroes of the Congo. There was the National Gallery. This was as far as I got.

On the way back I saw the Church of Ste. Gudule and forgot the name of my hotel. This, I must urge in justification, was nothing surprising considering that I had been in Brussels only for two and a half hours. Strange to say, it did not worry me very much.

I got back to the station. From there I tried all the streets going left. There were three hotels which looked like probables. But the interiors differed widely. The attendants looked at me suspiciously. They were sure that this was a new trick but they were not quite certain how it was worked. Then I remembered that my hotel had a varnished appearance rather than a painted one; and also that it had a sub-inscription recommending it to the tourist. I went back to the station and once more reconstructed my journey to the hotel earlier that day.

This time I succeeded. I had tried to enter the station but the ticket collector would not let me in even on the main station without my pass. My tickets were all at the hotel. Having found the place, I picked them up and missed my binoculars. A visit to the station was no longer a way of passing time. It was imperative. I wandered on the long platforms looking for the lost property office. When I did find it, the railway officials seemed disinclined for work so early in the day. It was difficult to make them understand what exactly had happened. At last a man who knew English came along. I entered a formal complaint to be forwarded to Ostend with instructions that the glasses should be kept till I went there

W E S T O F S U E Z

the next day. Stepping out I saw on the road the first lunatic I had noticed running astray in Europe, a woman who cursed and shouted at passers-by.

There was another Indian at the hotel I was told. I was shown the entry in the hotel register. I forget his name now but he was a young Muslim trading in Germany. He had entered himself as Muslim in the register column for 'Nationality' and his country of birth as 'Islam.' I asked him when he came down, why he had done so and he pointed to an entry in the register a few pages earlier where a young Indian had entered himself as Hindu in 'nationality.'

There is much in this matter of signing hotel registers and many Indians feel strongly on maintaining a certain consistency in doing so. It is difficult when you have been through a number of hotels, to remember a little detail like this. In most cases I let the hotel manager borrow my passport and make his own notes. Where I did my own work, I entered myself as Indian in the 'Nationality' column, though this designation has no international status. The passport entry, of course, is British subject by birth. In Britain no subject need enter his nationality in hotel registers.

My Muslim companion—to give him his chosen designation—was sharp, short and energetic. He was able to show me, in return for my sharing my discoveries with him, the Stock Exchange and the Grand Place which contains some of the best buildings in Europe,—notably the city hall and the house of the King, so-called because the royal address is read here to the States General. He had heard of the battlefield panorama at Waterloo and he had set his heart on visiting the field.

We had but one thing in common. Both of us were keen on talking to Belgians, any kind of Belgians. But here too there was a difference. I desired it as a relief from the too strenuous

A MINIATURE PARIS

conversation with my companion. He, or so he said, was studying Belgian character. Waiting for a bus to take us to Waterloo, we had a long talk with the tram-conductors at the square from which the trams and buses left. My companion nearly got into trouble by remarking (at my instance) that the man who was talking most with us, was a Rexist because he was "not communist, not Fascist, not democrat but for the King."

It took some time to disentangle the protesting tramway-men. And well it might since Belgium had only just then voted the Rexists out in the 1937 elections. My friend had a single-track mind; he kept on the track I had laid for him I watched the discussion between him who knew only English and German, and the conductors who knew French and said they understood English, from a detached position, seated, to the horror of my young friend, on the footboard of a tramcar.

We went to the battlefield by tram and bus and had a look at the panorama. There is a tent-like structure within which a very realistic picture of the battle (1815) is laid out on canvas. Standing on the central stage, one can reconstruct the battle scene. Little has been left to the imagination and the horses and generals are fixed around in gruesome scenes. The third dimension gives body to the portrayal. But there are still a few problems for the man who thirsts after knowledge. My companion worried the life out of me by asking me which was Napoleon and which his horse, where Wellington stood and why, how this General came to face that way, and other intriguing questions.

It was difficult for him to realise my indifference to something which had occurred a hundred years ago. As I understood even if I did not share his interest, I was the one to give in. I gave him a graphic, though probably inaccurate, account of the

W E S T O F S U E Z

main and minor events of that battle. I had really done a thorough job of it. I was myself amazed at the way in which I drew on my long-forgotten store of English history which school-masters had felt they had failed in equipping me with. Then I took him out and asked him what he thought of the show. He moaned pathetically, "But who was Napoleon?" In disgust I said that I would take him back and show it all to him again. Only the fear of having to pay a second entrance fee kept him away. He left that afternoon for Marseilles, I think. But before going he advised me earnestly not to let down my country by attending the Coronation. I congratulated myself aloud on having converted him from a communalist to a nationalist. He had taken a strong prejudice against the Belgians—"because the public do not turn back to look at us as we walk down the road" was an explanation which made me praise the Belgians for this mercy—and the fact that he always acted on the belief that nobody could understand him in Brussels, made him a difficult companion. After I saw him off, I finished the day with a ride round the town in a bus which seemed to be eternally driving farther away from my hotel.

The American Express Company was opening at nine on Monday morning. My train was due to leave at 9-23 for Ostend. I asked for my bill at the hotel and as early as 8-45 I went to the American Express office and waited till it opened. I had just time to change my money and catch my train. At Ostend I got back my binoculars after a little negotiation. I was first told that it had been sent back to Brussels to my hotel. Then just as the boat was about to start, a sailor came up and told me the purser had a packet for me. It was my binoculars. I identified it and after a little while a few francs and the binoculars changed hands. I was set for England and the Coronation.

CHAPTER XV

THE KING IS CROWNED

With much ado did get up into a great scaffold across the North end of the Abbey, where with a great deal of patience I sat till the King came in.....; The King passed through all the ceremonies of the Coronation, which to my great grief I and most in the Abbey could not see.—*Samuel Pepys.*

The days before Wednesday 12th May were anxious days for the British. The atmosphere, one could feel it, was tense. Never has a nation faced a Coronation with so nervous a feeling as the British did. After May 12, there was a general feeling of relief.

Rehearsals of processions and of the actual ceremony revealed the anxiety with which Britain faced the final performance. On this great occasion nothing must go wrong. Organisation loses spontaneity and the celebrations looked too much like a stage show. Soon the anxiety was gone and with it a certain interest. To forget this and to help foreign visitors to enjoy themselves, London each night grew riotous. But, after all, the Londoner had neither the money nor the leisure of the tourist and sight-seer. Besides, he was in his own home town. He had a certain freedom from convention during the week of festivity but still he had to keep well in his London groove. When I watched a party growing obstreperous, I looked closely to see if it was clumsy, unsophisticated enjoyment, the attempt of the little fellow to look big, or the abandon of the practised hand, of the man who feels that there are no new

W E S T O F S U E Z

joys in the world for him. If it is the first, the group is provincial. If the second, foreign.

The Londoner had lost his grip and he knew it. I heard from a good number of London men regret at this foreign invasion. "We cannot see our own King crowned," said one newsvendor, "because of these damned foreigners." "I don't mean you, sir," he added, "because you are British." "How does that make any difference?" I asked. "If we do want to see him crowned, we should get him over to India and have it done in Delhi." He agreed. London was not London in Coronation week. It had suffered a sea-change.

I came in on Monday evening. Coronation week had begun the day before but little of note had taken place except a final rehearsal on Monday morning and traffic difficulties on Sunday. The theatres seemed to be running plays rather inferior to their general output. As we came near the cliffs of Dover—to me a forbidding omen which luckily has proved false—an Englishman approached me and said that I would enjoy London and find the people the friendliest in the world. I said I was sure I would, because I had found that all over the world, I did not tell him that I had been in London before because that would have disappointed him.

When we got off I could hardly believe my ears. "Auslander links," a burly figure kept repeated monotonously directing foreigners to the left in German. There were very few Germans in my party but this was a generous gesture of British welcome. It also signified to me British recognition of the rising strength of Germany in Europe and the decline of French influence. But this was the least of all.

At the passport barrier I saw everyone pass through while the officer toyed with my passport. Then he turned to me.

THE KING IS CROWNED

"Name of your journal," he asked. I told him and he noted it down. "Place of residence in London," he continued. This was a more difficult question. I had cancelled reservation in a London hotel because I was informed by my agency in Brussels that I should have to pay 27s. 6d. a day for a guaranteed period of one week. I had appealed to Mr. Khambatta who had been a lawyer in London for fifteen years, to fix me up, and till I went to his office I had no address.

Then I remembered that Mr. Polak had been good enough to allow me to use his name if ever I got into trouble. "If you want any help, wire me from the Continent," he had said. Well, I could not wire him but I could give his address as a place where I could be got at. The trouble was not exactly what Mr. Polak envisaged and for long I had some twinges of conscience at the use I had made of his offer. But the officer was watching me closely and, conscience or no conscience, I had to get past him.

"216, Strand," I said with some amusement at the thought that it was a solicitor's office and not a residential address. Later I found I had made a mistake. Mr. Polak's office was actually at 265, Strand. The Customs man took it down.

"How long will you be in Britain?" was the next question.

"One month," I replied, reflecting that in this case over-statement was wiser than under-statement.

"Pass on."

I went over to the inspectors on the look-out for dutiable goods. Fortunately, Customs officers in Britain treat Indians with the forced patience one shows the illiterate. One of these gentlemen held out a placard to me.

"Do you read English?" he asked.

W E S T O F S U E Z

"Yes," I said and helpfully added, "I know all about that. I was through all this last month."

"Well, what have you?" he inquired.

I told him beginning with a new hat—"everything however small, must be declared"—and working up to a table-cloth in my trunk. From the seen to the unseen. "I hope you won't chalk my hat," I said. A feeble effort at humour which met with no response.

"I should like to see that table-cloth," he said.

I opened my things out and showed it to him.

"How much is that?" he asked me.

"It cost me ten pengos," I answered and that was all I could truthfully say.

"That is not much, is it?" he put in.

"About ten shillings," I told him.

That was over. But the worst was yet to come.

"I should like to see that book under your clothes," said a voice at my elbow.

Hullo, I thought to myself, the British are acquiring a taste for reading. But it was a Customs man again. He looked at it and found it good. It was a book by Priestley.

"What are these papers?" he went on, lifting up some news-sheets from Nazi Germany.

"Nazi literature," I said indifferently.

"That is all right," I was told.

"And this, and this, and this?"

Up came guide-books to Vienna, to Nuremberg, to Munich and to the Rhine. They needed no explanation and I gave none. But I began to grow suspicious. At first, I thought,

THE KING IS CROWNED ·

England had declared war. So I asked the official what had happened.

He said, "Oh nothing. We always do this."

"But not last month when I came in," I pressed.

"What is your paper? Not Socialist, is it?" asked my inquirer.

"Ah," I said, "you are the man who took notes on me over there. No, it is not. Are these Coronation precautions?"

Oh no. They were not. Business as usual, was the motto. But someone had got a bad fright somewhere. I told the officials that I had never had half this trouble travelling through the Continent, and made matters worse by arguing that a State which banned Communist books, should have more reason to ban Fascist books.

Once in London I went off to my travel agency for my letters. There was no ticket to the Coronation in my mail. I looked in on Mr. Khambatta to find him busy but he had managed splendidly. I settled down in my rooms and then went out for a stroll round the town. Almost accidentally I found myself in front of the Empire Press Union which was arranging press accommodation for the Coronation. Was it worthwhile going in? If there had been a ticket for me, surely they would have sent it over. Still one could never tell. I thought I would look in and I went up.

Mr. Turner was sitting alone with a dejected look at his typewriter, and as I stepped in, he looked up at me. Then, "Ah," he said, "I thought the Nazis had got you." And he handed me an official cover with a ticket to the Coronation and directions to get there.

And now a new problem. Resolutions had been passed in India against a Delhi Coronation and friends had warmly advised

W E S T O F S U E Z

me to give up the idea of attending the London ceremony; others had laughed at a serious-minded person (which I am not) going to a *tamasha*. Could I go? On the other hand I had applied. Now having set the wheels in motion, I had to go through with it. And there were other considerations.

I myself was anxious to see the Coronation. Anyway the day was far off—there were still some thirty odd hours to go—and, meanwhile, I could see how the London streets looked on gala days. But I saw little of London that night. On the Underground I met a man who had come down on the same boat and was working in London and we spent the next few hours in a London Indian restaurant.

Tuesday was a busy day, the hour of anticipation. During the day it was difficult to pick one's way through the crowds that gaped admiringly at the decorations. The high spot was Selfridge's which had decorated its frontage with aluminium tinted effigies of great men on great occasions in British history.

Tuesday evening was the Londoner's holiday. Up to that day the "foreigner" was in possession. He walked right instead of left and, when he got together with his tribe, he made everybody walk right. Traffic was in a chaotic condition. Only the perfect police management saved the situation. How different from India!

The inquiries, the hesitancy, the enthusiasm of the stranger, not only from India and the East and from Europe and America and Australia but even of the English from out of London, must have tested the nerves of the force. One man told me he liked the pre-coronation London better and I agreed. The foreign visitor has always more money than the resident to spend—not true in my case as I spend very little temperamentally—

THE KING IS CROWNED.

and he is a constant menace to the happiness of the local holiday-maker.

I was interested in the Londoner at play and I stepped out on Tuesday night at eight. It was still bright. Everywhere flags, everywhere the red, white and blue, everywhere the Coronation greetings on bunting; and through it all a certain gloom because of the bus strike. Would it be settled, would it extend? This was the problem and the newspapers played it up as the press anywhere would.

On the roads people crowded to the pavements. Squatting down there on the edge, they prepared for a night's rest or a night's vigil. Suddenly someone behind me said, "If only Windsor had chosen the right girl, we would have all gone mad tonight;" then he added, "Mind you I would have done just as he did in his place." His companion disagreed. I was glad Windsor did not choose "the right girl." London was mad enough to me.

Once again let us go back to Coronation week in London. Walk down London streets by day this week. The decorations are, according to the *Manchester Guardian*, in better taste now than they were in Jubilee week a year ago. But few others are satisfied with them, artistically. An Englishman who had been to India, was overheard in the train to remark that the Indian knew to do things better and had a greater artistic sense. He described the decorations of Indian houses on holidays with great enthusiasm and regretted that that had not developed in England. To everyone his own taste and if the English like it like this, why should we feel hurt?

Walk a little further down, on the Strand, Piccadilly, near Hyde Park. You are offered flags, roses, caps (horrid things) and you are invited to "wear your colours." Refuse and it is again offered you. Refuse again and you hear a string of

W E S T O F S U E Z

oaths that dismay you and make you feel sorry that you did not accept.

All this, however, is in the carnival spirit and he who does not like it, might safely stay at home and more profitably. But it is well to mark that from Prague to London the technique is the same. The rattle of the box, the solemn pressing on you of badges, flags and trinkets are familiar to me and I have learnt to say 'no' in five languages and with many jokes.

"Buy a Coronation baby, Sir," said one young woman, her eyes slightly emotional through early evening celebrations. I looked and drew back. The red, white and blue dolls on her tray would scare away even a drunken man.

"No thanks," I murmured.

"They are awfully good, they never cry," she retorted looking almost as though she would any minute.

"The fact is," I told her: "I am a bachelor and if I went home with a Coronation baby they would think ill of London there."

In the sally of laughter that greeted this imbecility, I made my way out and on to Trafalgar Square. A band and a crowd round the Nelson Column drew me closer. There were men dancing with women, women dancing with women, and an accordion and aviolin played the music. Young men went round (and young women too) in the ring and sang thickly. Then suddenly from the radio came a voice asking them to disperse lest they be dispersed. The voice kept on, its cultured tones jarring on the happiness of the crowd. Irreverently I thought of the Lord speaking to Moses and, as the men dispersed without seeming to obey, I felt the force of the unseen.

By Underground next to Hyde Park where men generally set no limit to their enjoyment. Again the same. Sale of flags,

THE KING IS CROWNED .

singing in groups, dancing, singing alone, drinking at the bars around. Next day the ruling classes celebrate. Enough of the enthusiasm of the masses. In the clubs and exclusive cafes, the rich and the aristocrats too enjoy themselves and they too drink and dance. As we pass by, we see them coming out and getting into their cars, bored. They have a busy day before them and they must rest before the celebrations in the morning. And it is already two o'clock. As I board the Underground, I am frankly shocked to see two Indians with coloured caps on their heads and fatuous smiles on their faces. They wish me and I return their greetings.

II

The press representatives had to be in their seats in Westminister Abbey by 7-15 on Wednesday morning and the Abbey was to be open from 6. When I turned in on Tuesday night at 2 a.m., I was full of the good resolution to be up by five and on the streets by 5-30. The newspapers had written at great length on the difficulty of getting about and had asked everybody to be in their places, or at least start trying to get there, one hour in advance. Fortunately I awoke an hour late and it was 6-40 before I left my place. I inquired and found that the nearest tube station to the Abbey from Russell Square was St. James' Park, as Westminister was closed by order, and it was with some trepidation that I made for the Underground.

To my surprise there was very little crowd. All seemed to have taken the advice of the police and the press, and gone ahead. There were a few stragglers like myself. I had two changes to make and all three lines were fairly comfortable. At St. James, more fear for I did not know how to get to my seat in the Abbey. I approached a policeman and showed him my ticket and kept on doing this till I was near the Abbey. I was ten minutes late and the orders issued by the Police were

W E S T O F S U E Z

definite on punctuality. "If you do not get to your place, remember you were too late," wrote the *Times* and, if you wish to do in Rome as the Romans, follow the *Times* blindly. I thought I would spend the rest of my time "remembering." It is one thing to keep out of a function by choice or even to be kept out of it, but to oversleep !

I reached the numbered entrance and from the careless attitude of the men guarding it, knew at once that my fears were groundless. I was taken up to my seat past the thrones. As we passed a row just above them I thought to myself, "Here's luck, they have done us well." But this was premature.

I was led to a seat in the North transept of the Abbey, midway between the floor and the ceiling, and I was in a few minutes facing three square feet of solid wall. Never have I cursed architectural structures more. The first thing that struck me was that we shall have to wait till the Germans invent transparent bricks. Then the discomfort of the seat I was on forced itself on my mind. A four-inch plank under me and a two inch bar behind my back kept me in place.

"Are you not thrilled by the thought of being present on this most sacred occasion ?" asked a voice beside me.

"Oh yes, rather," I replied, wondering whether I could still make a dash for the exit.

"What paper do you represent ?" continued the voice.

Politeness demanded that I face the speaker first before seeking comfort. I turned. A tired-looking woman in an Indian shawl (mango pattern) looked intently at me. I told her and turned to the other side. There was an Indian. "You are from India ?" I asked. "No, Ceylon," came the answer. It was, I found later, Mr. Vijayatunga, a young Ceylon journalist who is working in London. We started discussing politics in Ceylon and in India.

THE KING IS CROWNED

The woman stopped me once again.

"You know," she said, "this is the most sacred place to us. We never discuss politics here."

"Of course, not," I replied looking sternly at Vijayatunga but he was looking meditatively at the wall before him. Behind me an American was telling his neighbour loudly how fascinating the clothes of the people below were.

"Have you brought your food with you?" continued my inexorable neighbour. She was, like the rest of us, killing time by making as many people round her worried and excited as possible.

"No," I said wearily.

"That was very rash of you. We shall be here till 5 at least."

Ghastly prospect, I thought, that would upset my entire plan. But could one eat in the most sacred place?

Vijayatunga protested. He thought the ceremony would be over by 2 o'clock.

"But my, good man," said my neighbour, "All the others have to be got out before the press. And there are 10,000 here."

No argument. I shifted uneasily in my seat. The lower plank was covered by a cushion which kept sliding unexpectedly beneath you.

"There is not much you can see from here," I said conversationally to my neighbour. Another false move.

"But," was the ecstatic rejoinder, "you are privileged to be present on a grand occasion."

"What paper are you on, may I ask?" I inquired choosing a harmless subject.

"An army paper," she said.

W E S T O F S U E Z

I mis-heard ‘bogus paper’ and was surprised at this reply.
So I asked again.

“An A-R-M-Y paper.”

“Salvation Army,” whispered Vijayatunga in my ear.

“No Army,” I shot back between my teeth.

Two men in front of me stood up to see what was happening below. There were still two and a half hours to go before the King and Queen entered and the journalists were getting restless. “Will you please call the man before you ?” asked my neighbour of someone in front. He did.

“If only you would all sit down,” she addressed the house, “we might get a chance to see something. You have been given a seat. Why not sit down ?”

“There are still three hours to go, madam,” said the gentleman concerned, “and then you can see everything you want or try to see.”

“But I want to see now what you are all looking at,” she replied.

No answer ; no sitting down.

Behind boomed a voice, “The jolly thing about this show is, it will not occur again. I guess this is the last coronation you folks are going to have.” A withering glance over the shoulder of my neighbour did nothing to suppress the American optimist. I admire the American abroad. He is so much himself and he is so anxious to make everyone feel that way.

“If only the music would begin,” said my neighbour, “we need not listen to the idiotic remarks around us.”

“Quite,” I replied, “but I think it is rather fun to listen to people talking, don’t you ?”

“Of course, not.”

THE KING IS CROWNED

Shortly afterwards a foreign correspondent stepped in front of us and looked earnestly through opera classes.

"I thought," I remarked to my army neighbour, "Opera classes were not allowed."

"Of course, they are not," she said, "but these foreigners have no manners. They will never listen when they are told."

"Was that man you asked to sit down a foreigner?" I asked in a bland voice.

"No, but he is just a low common fellow."

In England, I gathered, one must be a foreigner or a low common fellow to do what one likes. A few minutes later my neighbour went out for a stroll. Her neighbour (*Times of Ceylon*) turned to me and asked if I was from Ceylon. "No, India," I said.

"Have a barley sugar?"

"Yes, thanks." (I have a passion for barley sugar and just then it was manna).

"Who," I asked, "is the old lady between us?"

"God knows," she said, "she is an Army paper representative."

The lady returned dropping her programme and papers as she sat down. A few minutes later she was called out by an official in resplendent uniform. As she went off she asked me to pass her bag as "there is something in it they want." We all sensed she would not be back and felt, awful unchristian thought, relieved.

It was now 9. Two hours still to go; I stepped out for a stroll. The representative for Jamaica (again a woman) was reading Milton on the seat next to Vijayatunga. Beyond, Kabadi was fidgetting about. Ah, I thought, the *Bombay Chronicle* is not keeping out of this. There was nothing

T H E W A Y O U T

to see in the passage, so I came back. By leaning out of one of the arches, one could see several notables below; Prince Chichibu and his wife, the Prince of Flanders, and Princess Juliana and her husband were right in front. At the other end sat Signor Grandi and Mr. Litvinoff side by side. Behind was Mr. Martin of Abyssinia and the representative from Nepal. A further effort and I was standing on my toes looking down at the Indian princes, "Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these." Sir Akbar and Lady Hydari sat just across. I went back to my seat. I had done enough for the next hour.

The Jamaica representative asked me if I had seen anything. I took her round and showed her the sights. She was much impressed by the Japanese lady who, she said, looked the sweetest of the lot. Taking her round the corner I looked for and found the Coronation thrones and pointed them out. Then back into our seats. We discussed the make-up of the peeresses below. "A good deal of prettiness but no real beauty," said my companion. "The real Hollywood touch," said I, "you see it from Budapest to Paris."

The Royal procession was coming. I left my companion and walked over to the arch and leant out once more. The main procession was moving in and the priests were just stepping up when I peeped out. The Archbishop of Canterbury had been pointed out to me for the third time (this time correctly) when I felt someone behind me. I turned and saw a very disconsolate young woman—more women spectators than men—looking left out. My Jamaica friend was well fixed up at the arch further down. I offered my window and was asked if anything important was on.

"No, only the Archbishop," I said.

"Oh, I just want to see the Queen."

THE KING IS CROWNED

"Here she is," I said and stepped back. Then in the small space there was left, I leant out once more. It was easier to get in than to get out. My feet had almost left the floor when the King crossed the Abbey. How did they look? Just grand. But truly I saw no more than the tops of their heads and their backs, as they passed by. We saw their faces from a distance and for a few seconds. The ceremony was performed at a spot beyond my view but receiving the homage of the peers was seen by us with a little difficulty.

The ceremonies over, the main problem was how to get out for a cigarette. Kabadi led the attempt at escape but we were put back and told to wait our turn. We went back and exchanged impressions. His Majesty's responses were low and in striking contrast to the booming questions of the formulae. The acclamations of the crowd in the Abbey were loud but characterless. The rehearsals had made the ceremonies perfect but had killed all life out of them. But the main thing that struck me was that the people had little part in the anointing and crowning of their King. In Berlin on Hitler's birthday, I had tried to secure a ticket on the platform. "Sorry," I was told at the Ministry of Propaganda, "but this is a military function and we can do nothing." The Coronation is a strictly aristocratic ceremony and, though the people are encouraged to crowd the streets and see the procession, they see nothing of the act itself. Then again the ceremony is too prolonged. As the American in the press gallery put it, the whole thing is dragged out.

A simpler and shorter ceremony and one that will allow of the masses participating in it, will have to replace the present one. It will give a central point for focussing popular enthusiasm on and will prevent much of the wild celebrations. It astonished me to note that the press in its comments was obscuring this real difficulty by raising the question of cinema

W E S T O F S U E Z

exhibition. It has insisted on a full length show of the Coronation scenes instead of the short picture put on in London theatres. This reflected the demand for a more popular function but sought to divert it. I was often told that I did not understand the British temperament which prefers the present historic ceremony, though the people see nothing of it, to something new which can be enacted before them. There are many historic incidents in Britain which could be made symbolic of sovereignty and, at the same time, are simple enough.

It is possible that I do not understand the British character. But after seeing the public celebrations in London, with young men careering down streets, shouting phrases culled from the talkies at the top of their voice, drifting aimlessly from bar to bar ; it requires much to persuade me that British feelings are very different from the feelings of other people. Give them a central focus for their rejoicing and you will at last see people knowing "how to be happy without being drunk." I do not mean by this that everyone out on Coronation night was drunk. But most of them tried their best to get that way.

III .

Before I left India a letter from Mr. Kedarnath Das Gupta invited me to look him up when I came to England. I had decided not to use my letters of introduction in places where I could go about by myself, because letters of introduction mean very often your having to stay twice as long in places as you would otherwise do. Moreover Mr. Das-Gupta belonged, I argued, to the United States and I was now doing only Europe and as much of America as came to this Continent. I had decided to take my responsibilities to Mr. Das-Gupta lightly. I had certainly no intention of waiting in England till he came over and I knew no one who could tell me of his movements.

THE KING IS CROWNED

But fate took a hand. It was one of those unaccountable things which give even the most sober of us fantastic ideas. We had two holidays together, Sunday and Whit Monday. And holidays can be awfully dull in London. I awoke at 10-30 on Monday morning—late rising being a European virtue which I had acquired in the last ten days—and prepared to get out in a leisurely manner. It was 12-30 when I did go out and the *Evening News* was already selling on the streets. I usually do not read the *Evening News* and when I do I read it with the secrecy with which my old school friends used to read Boccaccio or Sexton Blake.

I decided not to buy the paper and I passed four news-boys with the penny safe in my pocket. Suddenly I saw a restaurant, "The New Delhi," at a bend of the road. So I dived down the side-street to inspect it.

I have a penchant for Indian restaurants abroad and I have tried nearly all of them in London. I ordered my lunch and asked the waiter to get me a paper, morning paper not an evening one, as I wanted news. The man returned in ten minutes with the *Evening News*.

With a mixture of snobbishness, the desire to appear different, and obstinacy, I put the paper aside and finished my lunch. Then curiosity and a heavy stomach worked havoc on me and I took up the paper to glance through the news. Straight in front of me smiled out one face and there was no mistaking it. It was Mr. Kedarnath Das-Gupta complete with Gandhi cap and smile. This was something I felt I could not keep down. I went through the paper for Mr. Das-Gupta's address, found none. Looked again for the address of the paper, found little beside "Carmelite House." I dashed to the nearest (or what I thought was the nearest, not always the same thing) telephone booth and looked through the directory

W E S T O F S U E Z

for a further address; and drew another blank. Then I decided to make for Fleet Street and inquire there. I found the office, saw the features-editor and I learnt from him that Mr. Das-Gupta was at the Savoy Hotel. The features-editor had apparently pleasant recollections of Mr. Das-Gupta for he smiled when I mentioned his name.

Most people, I learnt, did not take Mr. Das-Gupta as seriously as they believed he took himself. What surprised me and would no doubt surprise most of those who have met him, is that Mr. Das-Gupta takes nobody seriously, not even himself. He has a belief in his religious mission but he is no respector of persons. But this is anticipating.

I was struck with the irony of Mr. Das-Gupta's staying in the Savoy Hotel and so were, I believe, the English journalists to whom he had spoken of his passion for the simple life. When I went there I fully expected to see him entertaining or being entertained by the princes, priests or other dignitaries in this fashionable hotel. So I felt I would just have to leave my card and go out again. But when I sent up my name to him I was asked to "come up at once."

I went to the seventh floor and there was Mr. Das-Gupta welcoming me in. I went with him to see two people that day, an Indian student who lived in Hampstead, and Mrs. Gasque, an American lady, who has supported the movement generously. We dined that night at an Indian restaurant and I left him at ten o'clock. The next day I was with him a good deal helping in arrangements for the evening's (May 18, 1937 Good Will Day) meeting, inaugurating the All Faiths Coronation celebration, mainly by getting hold of the men who had agreed to speak on the occasion.

I must admit that Mr. Das-Gupta is a puzzle to me. He is a very simple soul but yet he seems very complex at times.

THE KING IS CROWNED

He has a healthy cynicism for all political leaders in India and outside, and yet he seems to have a real veneration for many of them. I think English people do not understand him and they are rather annoyed with themselves for failing to take in so seemingly simple a personality. One begins by thinking that one is so much wiser and smarter than Mr. Das-Gupta and ends up with serious doubts about it. I made this discovery really early in my talks with him. And I have enjoyed seeing the same thing happen to persons who came to interview him. Mr. Das-Gupta has actually converted a journalist. I, of course, am not the man. I need no conversion, as Mr. Das-Gupta would say.

The first thing he told me was that I was going to America with him. "Not," I replied, "unless you pay my passage there." He was obviously disgusted with this mercenary outlook. He told me that if I lived simply as he did I could do it cheap, but not "if you go as your father did," he said, wagging his head tragically.

I laughed not so much at what my father had done as at Mr. Das-Gupta's remark shot at me from a cosy nook in the Savoy. He explained to me with great regret that this was greatness thrust upon him, that he was in the Savoy because his friends thought it would help the movement, and that he really was a very simple man who wore a two-guinea suit.

Now a woman, they say, must never tell her age. A man, in my opinion, should never tell how much he paid for his clothes. Mr. Das-Gupta was in the group that understates. I knew he must have paid more for it or that he must be singularly shrewd in laying out his two guineas. I had often spent more than that and got something very much below the quality of cloth Mr. Das-Gupta used. But it was a striking picture of "poverty in the midst of plenty" and aesthetically I appreciated it.

W E S T O F S U E Z

Mr. Das-Gupta has in his gay young days produced plays in London and the dramatic eye is very keenly developed in him. I do not mean that he is playing a part but that it is natural for him to be dramatic. He was very unhappy when he thought of the Savoy but quite pleased when he thought of the suit. I told him that it was wrong of him to attach any importance to appearing simple—as much as it was of his friends to insist on his staying in the best hotel. But he did not agree. He spent, I observed, more time outside than in his room.

Mr. Das-Gupta was fixing a Coronation meeting of his World Faiths Conference and the meeting was for the next day. On Tuesday, therefore, I went to Whitefield's Institute on Tottenham Court Road, and reported myself for duty at 10-30 in the morning. We had a very pleasant talk with a press reporter and I was introduced to Mr. Charles Weller, a typical American, who has a record of social service in his country, co-founder of the Fellowship with Mr. Das-Gupta. After a little while, Mr. Das-Gupta asked me if I would round up the speakers for the evening and I rashly agreed. "Four at City Temple," he reminded me.

I had a little work at the India Office myself, so I started on the three members of the India Council. I dropped in at the Information Office to thank the men for getting me an Abbey ticket for the Coronation and discussed politics with them as usual.

I then asked for Dewan Bahadur Sir Ramaswami Mudaliar and the officer was good enough to take me over. I had met Sir Ramaswami ten years ago in Madras and seen him at the Age of Consent Committee meeting in Bombay after that. I was surprised to see him looking completely run down and I asked him if he had been ill. It was apparently the strain of the Coro-

THE KING IS CROWNED •

nation functions that had worn him out. He gave me the impression that Mr. Das-Gupta had hustled him into the business and, when I left him with a programme, I was not sure whether he would come or not that evening.

Sirdar Mohan Singh, I was told, was at his home in Putney. So I went down there, almost an hour's drive from Westminster. A young Sikh gentleman who answered the bell, told me the Sirdar Sahib was at the India Office. I went back and was told that the Sirdar had left at twelve noon. It was then three. I kept the Sirdar's secret and went for the next man, Sir Prabhshankar Pattani, at Grosvenor House.

My taxi took thirty minutes to go there from India Office, a record time and surely, of interest to my English friends who say, "It can't happen here." The taxi-driver had taken me to see the sights.

Sir Prabhshankar had two other engagements, one before and one after. He was a very tired man. The girl who was working as his additional Secretary, said she had worked two years before under my father, and had written up a book with him. I asked her where it was and she said in London; and I said that it was not possible because my father was in India then. It was some other Natarajan who was a schoolmaster.

Sir Prabhshankar after some thought decided to come down to the meeting and we went over together. I was rather doubtful of the success of the meeting with so many threatened defaults. Once he had decided to attend, Sir Prabhshankar lost his irritability. I was rather uneasy at inflicting a public meeting on him at his age, but he did his best to relieve me of my fears. We had a common bond. It was, one would hardly believe it, tomato soup at the London milk bars. Sir Prabhshankar's enthusiasm was comforting to one who had nursed it as a secret vice.

W E S T O F S U E Z

At the City Temple there was a gathering of roughly a thousand. Sirdar Mohan Singh opened the proceedings with prayers of eleven faiths. Sir Prabhashankar read the Coronation prayer which, I thought, was a little too coronational for an All Faiths Conference. We were indebted to the journalist from the *Evening Standard* for the inclusion of "Jehovah of the Jews" in the prayer, because Mr. Das-Gupta had left Him out in his hurry and excitement.

I am not, I hasten to add, a religious man. But you cannot move with Quakers, Nazis and All Faiths preachers without getting the gift. More prayers, "God save the King," and then the audience was off. To us was left the sad task of picking up the leaflets and covers which were left on the seats. Mr. Das-Gupta, basing his action on previous experience, had planned for a bigger group. But there were many things on that day. The Duke of Gloucester's reception at India Office had kept many people off. In the evening we reviewed the day's work at a restaurant and were content. Mr. Das-Gupta, I suspect, saw in me a strong ally for future work.

CHAPTER XVI

CUSTOMS AND CODES

An empirical race *par excellence*, they distrust theory and hate theories. In the daily walk of life they are entirely free from the burden of rationality, the bane of continental existence.—*G. J. Renier.*

The first few days of my second stay in London were coloured by the Coronation; the last by the Fellowship of Faiths. I have also mentioned the friends who gave atmosphere to my London. But there were others, the "men in the street," who also told their tale and, before I leave London for the more English countryside, I must set down a few of these contacts.

First because the least important of these, was Khambatta's office boy, a young man of some seventeen years just outgrowing pimples. I had an unique opportunity of conversing with this misanthrope one evening when Mr. Khambatta was away. He was a staunch admirer of the new King as contrasted with the last one. I asked him idly why this was so. "Because," he replied, "he is older than Neddy." Neddy, he explained, was his affectionate nickname for Edward VIII. I wondered how Neddy was Prince of Wales and George VI the Duke of York, if the latter was the older. He did not know but he was sure he was right.

Ten minutes later he returned in a state of excitement. "He was afraid," he said, that I was right. "Right about what?" I queried, all thought of kings out of my mind.

WEST OF SUEZ

"About the Prince of Wales, Sir," he replied ; "Fancy your knowing all about it." I thanked him for the compliment.

He was encouraged by his first mistake and he talked to me as one man to another. He was much upset, poor fellow, by the women of modern England, who were all going, or had gone, to the dogs and, what was worse, were dragging innocent young men along with them. It was all, he said, due to these "foreigners" who were the plague of London. The cinema houses in certain districts, he warned me, were dangerous places for men to go to. And he had a vague premonition that the bus strike then on, presaged the end of the world.

An attendant at a hotel which I visited, was equally staunch but in support of Edward VIII. "But we are a democratic people," he maintained ; "even if the majority wanted him on the throne, we must listen to the Premier." This was a terse account of British democracy.

I had reached a stage when I realised the wisdom of the old Indian phrase that it mattered little whether Rama ruled or Ravana—particularly in a constitutional government and in Coronation Week. It was then that I met a number of persons who wore their "colours" for their Prince, the Prince of Wales.

Once I actually came up against the "law of the land" at Victoria Station. It is apparently the rule that chemists and provision stores can sell anything till 8 p. m., chocolates till 9, and medical supplies for a little longer. I knew nothing of this. I wanted a toothbrush and accompanied by an Indian friend whose longer stay had not brought him greater knowledge, approached the station stores for one. It was after 8 o'clock and I was refused it. I pointed out that a woman had bought a stick of chocolate just before me. Well, said the merchant with a take-it-or-leave-it air, that is the law of the land.

C U S T O M S A N D C O D E S

My friend suggested in a stage aside that that must have been vitamin chocolate and so, medicine. I said that I had no objection to a sterilised toothbrush. I told the man at the counter that, since clean teeth prevented decay, a toothbrush was medical goods. This rather infuriated him. I was regarded as a foreigner who ridiculed local customs. Later I learnt the truth from a chemist with whom I established friendly relations — friendly enough to get anything I wanted as long as the shop was open and the package was delivered to me sealed with red seal.

The "unwritten laws" of the land perplexed me. Why, for instance, should the buses stop outside Hotel Russ although there was no stop signal set up there? This, I found, had always been so. I saw several people standing on the spot and joined them, looking to the right for something to turn up and it was the bus.

On another occasion I found a straggling snakey line of human beings on the pavement of a road and joined up. The line turned with a bend on the road. Progress was slow but there was progress. At long last I found myself some twenty persons away from a ticket office. I extricated myself from the mass and walked on. It was a cinema queue. A queue is recognisable in print but not always in reality.

I rigidly followed notices that at this hotel or restaurant no tips should be offered to attendants and wondered why I was not more eagerly served. The attendants, I was told towards the end of my stay, did accept tips, but did it absent-mindedly. One felt at such places as if one was buying a new hat every time one redeemed it from the cloak-room man. The English still preserve the Nelson touch.

All the uneducated or little educated addressed me in broken English, the tribute that Englishmen pay to the alien.

W E S T O F S U E Z

It is better to speak bad English yourself. It raises a certain amount of sympathy which is a great asset. It gives your informant a "superiority complex" which is asset number two. The manager at a hotel I stayed in, felt happy when she could correct me for using the word "suited" instead of "suitable." But I did not give her that satisfaction. The pleasure of correcting lies in the other party accepting it. I said that it was an Indian adaptation of the English usage. After all, if the Americans can make hay of the English language why should we not carry out minor alterations?*

One of Mr. Das-Gupta's interviews had appeared in an English paper in headline English, devoid of grammar and of sense. When the reporter appeared at the Fellowship Office, I asked him if it was his masterpiece or Das-Gupta's. Both disclaimed it. I remarked that the future international language would probably resemble this picturesque and brief interview. Mr. Das-Gupta solemnly warned me against speaking correct English, which was antiquated. There was such a thing, he said, as idiom and usage which was too often ignored by outsiders. The reporter had a twinkle in his eye. I won his support in shattering an illusion of Das-Gupta's that women no longer looked with adoring eyes on the soldier's uniform. It was obvious, I remarked, that Mr. Das-Gupta believed the world had gone wiser with him in the last twenty odd years. On Coronation night the old story still held true. The young man from the press agreed wistfully with me. The civilian, the young civilian, knows what danger lurks behind the uniform.

And then there was my friend, the newsvendor outside Liverpool Street Underground, who displayed a startling familiarity with political language. In a short discourse he covered a wide field from monarchy and the theocratic state to feudalism, from feudalism to Liberalism, from Liberalism to Socialism—perhaps, he said wistfully, through Fascism and

C U S T O M S A N D C O D E S

through Communism. He told me how India would win her freedom and jump through to the Socialist state, the British contribution to India's future.

It was fascinating. I offered him a soap-box at Hyde Park. That, he said, was for fools. He could only do his work and put his ideas through by talking to individuals. "You, of course," he said apologetically, "know much of what I have said. Excuse me if I have bored you. But these young men," he pointed to two fellow-vendors who were listening to him, "would never listen to me but for an educated foreign gentleman being here." After they had left, he told me that time and again he had tried to awaken them from their apathy but they had ignored him. With the air of fellow-conspirators, he gave me and I took a well-thumbed copy of a Socialist paper published a year back. I apologised for that soap-box.

Last on my list is the too literal Indian who asked me in pained surprise after a stroll in Hyde Park, "I cannot understand why they call it Hyde Park. Everything here is done in the open." I explained that it was not an advertisement of a secluded corner, but a public garden and that the name was spelt with a "y."

II

My appointments were coming home to roost. Mrs. Pitt of Cambridge and Penukonda had invited me to visit her; Sir S. Radhakrishnan had asked me down to Oxford; Mr. Horace Alexander had written to me that he would be in Birmingham towards the end of May; and to Salisbury I had a standing invitation from Mrs. Ferreira, a fellow-citizen of Bandra.

I spent a very pleasant day at Cambridge. Mrs. Pitt was intensely distressed at the growing estrangement between the two countries she loved so well and I am afraid that she found me light-hearted and even light-headed on all political

W E S T O F S U E Z

questions. It would have ill become me as a guest and one so junior to my kind hostess, to have entered into political controversy with her. Mrs. Pitt was living all by herself in Park Street. It is difficult to avoid feeling that one is causing needless trouble in the circumstances. To have got on to political argument would have been inflicting an added burden. I am not, I am afraid, quite convinced that democracy means all that it is said to mean or even the same thing to all men. And it is perfectly futile to argue on the superstructure when two persons differ as to the strength of the foundations.

We dined that evening at the local Indian restaurant. Next to our table were two young men and two women who could not make their wants understood to the Indian waiter. I intervened with a translation of the words "curds" to "dahi" and the waiter told me he had not caught the meaning because the others pronounced it "cu-uds." For my pains I was rewarded with a "I don't care what you call it but if it is the stuff that is all right," from a lordly young man. I explained to him that my intervention was only in their interest. The day ended with a glance over the famous "Backs," and Milton's mulberry tree, I think.

The next morning I left Mrs. Pitt with a promise to call again—a promise I thought better of later and withdrew by letter from Edinburgh. I have no doubt that I would have enjoyed it but there was no purpose in going back. I could scarcely expect to capture the spirit of a great University town in half a day or to change my political views. There was no point, therefore, in putting Mrs. Pitt out once more. Besides I was anxious to get started on my return journey.

I took the services of a young Indian at the restaurant and went through the different colleges. The river is much esteemed by residents and students alike, but it

C U S T O M S A N D C O D E S

is difficult to recognise as a river at most times. I was lost in admiration of a people who with this inadequate raw material fashioned a strong university boat team.

I set out for Oxford a few days later (May 22) from Paddington. I had refused the services of a porter and, when I remembered that I should send word to Sir Radhakrishnan of the time of my arrival, I left my suitcase on the platform and went to the telegraph office, on the station. I could not have been away five minutes but when I returned the suitcase was missing. I made for the lost property office, explained the circumstances and retrieved my case, after suffering with patience a lecture on my carelessness.

It is sometimes cheaper, always more pleasant to take a porter. I am sure my little mishap was due to a malicious porter. In the United Kingdom, however, a stranger who takes a porter asks for trouble. There is the wretched practice of tipping instead of paying the man. This often leaves the porter under a sense of grievance and always with the injured look of an exploited worker. The local residents do not care for this though they are the main cause of it. The visitor who does not know the tricks of the trade, overtips if he hates to figure in a scene; undertips, or thinks he does, and figures as a miserly brute. I had a discussion with some porters at Birmingham and they too felt that a regular tariff would be preferable.

When I went back the train had left. Another wire to correct the first one and I was ready for another hour's wait. I went to the lost property office and requested the man in charge to hold my bag a little longer for me, persuaded him after a discussion and settled down to tea at the restaurant. The tea was unnecessary but I wanted a place to sit down and finish my letters home. By the time I had posted them to India by air, I found there was just five minutes left for my train.

W E S T O F S U E Z

Sir Radhakrishnan had planned to have me met at the station but, owing to the confusion created by my telegrams, I reached his place by myself. It was a thoroughly Indian reception that I received at his house and I had a much-appreciated taste of South Indian food that night after an interval of roughly three months. I was surprised to find that the Radhakrishnan family were suffering from a kind of home-sickness though he had carried his home with him to Oxford. I asked Sir Radhakrishnan how he accounted for this and he did not seem able to explain it.

From what I gathered, from the indirect evidence mainly, his work at the University was the least of his troubles. His Indian mail must have been a source of annoyance ; for there was not one which did not bring some request—to have a son or daughter admitted into the University ; to have a book favourably noticed by the English press ; or some visitor who took up his time needlessly as I did.

Sir Radhakrishnan had arranged a full programme for my stay. I intended to be in Oxford only a day but he told me there was to be a dinner at All Souls College the next day and he said that he would like me to go there with him. For the morning a young Indian student had agreed to take me round the Colleges and Sir Radhakrishnan's two daughters accompanied us to see that he did not leave out anything. I was surprised to learn from them that many of the "sights" there were visited by them for the first time. It was almost unbelievable that so many (actually four) Indians should be moving together in an English town and half of them Indian women at that.

There was a tea party that evening at Sir Radhakrishnan's house when an octogenarian Turkish gentleman turned up and a lady from Finland, I believe. And by the time that was over we had to dash off to the All Souls' dinner. The dinner

C U S T O M S A N D C O D E S

was all that one might expect it to be. The formalities of eating and what you ate were not in keeping with the monastic simplicity of the bare table. The diners wore grave faces and spoke low. I recollect the perturbation caused to my neighbour on my right by my picking up the wrong implement—I have never got myself accustomed to the weapons of food—and to see that expression I would have even stood on my head, if I could do it. He had just come back from some benighted spot in China, Africa or some such place (it was not India); but he was not prepared for barbarism and ignorance at All Souls. Exercise is provided by walking into another room for your nuts and fruit and to yet a third room for your coffee.

Feeling that I should give Sir Radhakrishnan a little rest—he had another Indian guest, Prof. Radhakamal Mukherji—I broke away from him. For a few minutes I floated like a drop of oil in water. Then a young man who looked forlorn, came up and spoke to me. He also knew no one there and he was rather awed by the solemnity of the occasion. The gentleman separated from me near the coffee cups. I did not want to fasten myself on him and I wandered off to see the pictures on the wall.

I had been introduced earlier to a rather middle-aged, middle-class professor who came up to me and asked what I was doing. “Oh, just looking round,” I said offhand. He grew embarrassed and did not know how to ask what my business was. I told him I was a journalist. “I hope,” he said, “you will write of this evening; it is a great privilege to dine at All Souls.” He took me over to a corner and showed me a list of members. “And this is how,” he remarked, “men of academic distinction keep in touch with the outside world—journalism, business, law, medicine, politics. You must write well of all this.” Where had I heard this before? It had a familiar touch. Suddenly the walls dissolved before me; the professor

W E S T O F S U E Z

who was with me, disappeared. I was once more listening to the Kraft durch Freude leader on the Rhine, "You must write well of Hitler and the Kraft durch Freude." To neither of them did it really matter what I wrote.....But both were earnest.

I had mentioned to the professor that I was going to the Quaker College at Woodbrooke. And he told me that it was quite a different thing, a middle-class institution. In a discussion with the young student who had taken me round, I gathered that an investment spirit is creeping into Oxford students. They enter Oxford not for the blessings that this experience would confer on them, but for the profit that a degree will bring. It is hard to believe this. The atmosphere at Oxford, the very air one breathes, seems to belie it. I had seen Oxford more thoroughly than Cambridge. I can imagine occasions when the pleasant university town could well be a comfort to the mind. But I cannot associate serious study with either place. The fault no doubt is mine.

I left Oxford for Salisbury on Monday morning. It had been a welcome Indian interlude in my wanderings. It was a rare privilege to have had this week-end "back in India," as it were.

III

Very different was Broad Chalk in Salisbury. But equally warm was the welcome that waited me there. It was a glorious week. Both Mrs. Ferreira and her mother, Mrs. Roper, have the gift of dispensing hospitality as though they are receiving a favour. I am afraid I rather took advantage of this. I reached the place on Monday afternoon. I intended to stay till Wednesday at the most. There was a tea-party on Thursday; a reception under the auspices of the Fellowship of Faiths on Friday, and I felt I owed it to Mr. Das-Gupta to be present on

C U S T O M S A N D C O D E S

both occasions. But Broad Chalk was very like Lonavla—at any rate to my mind which seizes on similarities rather than differences. I enjoyed my stay there and saw no reason why I should exchange comfort, good company, the privilege of going without a shave for days on end, the rare opportunity of talking of things familiar to both conversationalists for the doubtful and, to me, distressing honour of balancing a quarter-plate on one knee and a cup of tea on the other and saying a lot of pretty things which mean nothing or ought to mean nothing. As a rationalist—spasmodic—I did not do what I saw there was no reason to do. Mr. Das-Gupta received a wire that I was unavoidably detained. I stayed on till Friday afternoon.

My most energetic day was, I believe, the day after I got to Broad Chalk. We went to Stonehenge. It was not very energetic for we went by car and we respected the official notice in the old Roman remains near by “not to clamber about on the walls.”

Mr. John Cowper Powys in “A Glastonbury Romance” devotes a good number of pages to a description of the Great Stone Circle at Stonehenge ending with the triumphant words, “There is no doubt that this was the greatest temple of the Druids.” The whole section is a mystic treatment of two characters in the novel and their reactions to the more prominent stones in the circle. But what they felt at the Slaughter Stone, might have been the heat, or just indigestion, or the after-effects of over-indulgence or repression (it is always the one thing or the other), but it was not second-sight or clairvoyant sympathy with the old Druids. Because the monolith is now regarded as pre-Druidic, 2000 B.C.

For the next four days I was a lotus-eater with a vengeance. Did it rain? We talked in the drawing-room. Was it a bright day? We talked outside on the lawn. The problems

W E S T O F S U E Z

of the village and the small town are much the same the world over.

There was an animated discussion one day at tea between a fellow guest who trotted out two relatives in Buckingham Palace, and a woman in the house who was euphemistically referred to as a "help" who had only one cousin there. This proportion of two to one amazed me and, I, believed, my hostesses, for the guest was Irish.

But this could hardly last. On Friday I toyed with the idea of returning to London. As the day grew older, the thought receded farther from my mind. Then at three that afternoon it flashed on me that I must make an effort and that I might as well do so now as later. I packed and riding into Salisbury on the bus, I caught the 4:30 train.

Late that evening I went out to post my air mail. Outside the Euston Friends House, I saw Mr. Das-Gupta leaning heavily on a stick, a cherubic smile lighting up his face, a trifle disconsolate. He was looking for new worlds to conquer. I gave him one as I hailed him. He was just returning from a Peace meeting—meetings are a passion with him. I dined with him that night and on Sunday I went to Manchester for a Fellowship meeting.

After Manchester I cut loose from the Fellowship. I was planning a journey through the English lakes to Scotland and then to the Irish Free State. I thought it time to get started.

C H A P T E R XVII

YESTERDAY, TODAY AND FOR EVER

It is what makes these far distant speakers friends to us, intimate as we are sometimes intimate for a moment with the best living human beings.—*A. Clutton Brock.*

On Wednesday June 2nd and Thursday, I was in Stratford. The first night I attended a performance of "A Winter's Tale" at the Memorial Theatre; on Thursday "King Lear." During the day I did the usual round of visits to Anne Hathaway's cottage, Mary Arden's home, Shakespeare's house, the Church, the Grammar School (exterior), the museum, and so on. The only noteworthy feature was that I went by tourist car to Mary Arden's home, expressed a desire to stay on after the other tourists tired of it, bade them farewell and walked from there to Anne Hathaway's cottage, and on to the Memorial Theatre. In doing so I missed my way and only found the right track after going two miles out. There was a certain kinship between these old houses and the Goethe House which I had seen so recently in Frankfurt; to this a further link was added in Wordsworth's Dove Cottage in the Lake District. Building ideas had not changed much for hundreds of years. And even today the hotels in these parts are not in the least modernised.

The commercial spirit hangs thick over the birth-place of Shakespeare. Every little shop exploits his name. The tourist has spoiled life for the people in this once placid town.

W E S T O F S U E Z

I think the smartest businessman of them all was the man who sold pictures, cards, booklets, coronation souvenirs and cheap Shakespeare plays, outside the Memorial Theatre. He was born "just fifty yards" from the place where Shakespeare had been born. He spotted me as I was walking aimlessly about on the first day; and advised me to walk along the river and enjoy the breeze. I did. When I came back to buy a "Lear," he pulled out a good number of Shakespeare booklets. There were two women coming up to him. "Now watch me, Sir," he said, "while I tackle these South Africans." In the negotiations that ensued he tried to sell them the bargains he had sold me, two volumes for the price of one. "This gentleman," he said, "has bought it to send to his friends in India. I am sure you, madam, would like to send them to South Africa?" This the lady did not like but in the end she bought a copy of each. What surprised me was that she was from South Africa. He said that he could tell by looking at people.

Over a cigarette, we talked of many things, particularly hotels and eating-houses. He wished to establish a monopoly over my purse. He said that I was certain to be stung if I dined outside my hotel. His thoughts switching on to another topic, he asked if I had my Indian dress with me. I said I had.

"Do you mind," he asked slyly, "if your expenses here go up by thirty per cent?"

"I do," I retorted emphatically.

"Ah that, Sir," he said, "is a great pity."

I wondered what he was driving at.

"You see," he explained, "on Friday there will be a great crowd round here. If you dressed yourself up and stood by my side I could clear my stock."

YESTERDAY, TODAY AND FOR EVER

It seemed that the country people were anxious to hear an Indian talk. But they were so eager not to appear ill-mannered that they would draw near and buy something just to hear me. The disadvantage would be to me. Every one who saw me in Indian clothes and who had occasion to collect money from me, would charge me extra. They would think I was a rich man, he said. I begged to be excused. That was all right, he rejoined; even this had brought him business. As "commission" he gave me two pence worth of pictures which I did not want but which he insisted on my taking.

Shakespeare's birth-place had been owned by a shrewd butcher who charged his visitors two shillings for the privilege of carving their names on the windows, chairs, tables and even the beams; then it was acquired by the National Trust. There was a distinguished collection of eminent men who had sought this immortality. Today you are charged for entrance and are allowed to record your respect more conventionally in a visitors' book. There was an old lady in charge of these rooms who gave a bright chuckle at the butcher's ingenuity. She took the trouble of explaining things twice to me "because you are patient and you cannot understand all that I am saying." Never was teacher more patient with a backward student. I believe she would have let me carve my name below Walter Scott's if I had wanted to. As it was I had to submit to a needless duplication and consequent waste of time.

New Place where Shakespeare spent the later years of his life, is also included in a Shakespeare pilgrimage. But there were no other visitors when I got to it. I was passing through into the New Place gardens from the house, when I heard footsteps running behind me. I stopped. I had forgotten to send a wish down the well and one of the women in charge of the place had come to tell me of it. I turned with a laugh. "What," I asked, "am I to do?" "Just walk round the well in silence,

W E S T O F S U E Z

look down the well and wish," she said with a smile, "and it will come true." I had nothing to wish for. I pushed open the gate to the gardens and passed on.

To me it seemed that Stratford had an oppressive air. It has very much the appearance of a wayside railway station where incoming trains are watched with undiminished enthusiasm and with hope. There are, of course, parts free from this and I never felt the full charm of the countryside as when I escaped out of Stratford on my long walk between green fields from Mary Arden's house to the Hathaway Cottage.

II

From Stratford-upon-Avon I went to Birmingham. I called first at Mr. H. G. Alexander's house and learning that he had gone to Woodbrooke, I asked my taxi-driver to take me there. I was rather reassured when he said that Woodbrooke was just ten minutes drive from Mr. Alexander's place. Selly Oak, Woodbrooke, is the central educational institution for British Quakers, I might even say for European Quakers. Set in spacious grounds, Woodbrooke is out of the industrial life of Birmingham.

Mr. Alexander was remarkably elusive. He seemed to have been everywhere "just five minutes back" but nowhere where we got to. Mr. Henry Cadbury, the Warden of Selly Oak College, was out. The housekeeper, Miss Fowler, was not to be seen. I was in the hands of the efficient Secretary of the institution for a few minutes which began to look interminably long to me. Then Mr. Alexander came on the scene and rescued me. A little leisurely hustling and my room was located or rather allotted. And then Mr. Alexander left me with Mr. John S. Hoyland at Holland House.

Mr. Hoyland took charge of things at once. He managed the transfer of my luggage from the porch to my room, while I

YESTERDAY, TODAY AND FOR EVER

followed with the lighter bags remonstrating futilely against the trouble he was taking. But nothing would check Mr. Hoyland. He had a young student in who was doing a thesis on India's poverty. I had for a long time been puzzled by the prevalence of drunkenness in Great Britain, to a far greater extent than in Europe. And I was anxious to know whether it was possibly due to the practice of early closing in public houses.

. A man who could not get a drink after 11 at night, might well decide to take as much as he could before. I thought this was a good opportunity to find out. I put it to Mr. Hoyland and he had a hearty laugh. The young student, however, did not accept my theory. He held that the alcohol content of British drinks was greater than that of, for instance, the German drinks.

Mr. Alexander was holding a class at 11 o'clock and he had said that I could attend it, if I cared to. One of the students read a paper on the Baltic States and a discussion followed on it. Friday June 3 was a busy day at Woodbrooke. Mr. Carl Heath was to speak in the evening on India. I was rather nervous of meeting him as I had already been to one of his lectures and I did not wish him to feel I was trailing him around Britain. He came in at tea-time. I was sitting on the lawn with my legs crossed beneath me and I was trying to educate some Norwegians and Danes in this method of sitting. We greeted each other Indian style—with hands folded.

At the lecture Mr. Alexander got me out to the front on the ground that Mr. Heath would like me to say something after his talk. Mr. Heath had seen my comments on his previous talk at Friends House in London in *The Indian Social Reformer* and he had written a letter correcting some of my impressions. I did not know it at the time. So when he said in his speech time and again that "my Indian friend will probably not agree with me," I was completely mystified. It was, I felt generally, a speech which took a more advanced view than the Euston

W E S T O F S U E Z

speech did. Mr. Heath condemned the Reforms but held that in the provinces they gave Indians a great deal of power. He ended with the hope that India would remain in the Empire and that he himself had found most Indians anxious to remain within it but that he feared I would not agree. He wished to stop as he wanted to hear my views.

I was probably a trifle aggressive but that was due to the nervousness of facing an audience. I opposed the acceptance of office by the Congress on the ground that the constitution was fundamentally as weak in the provinces as Mr. Heath had shown it to be in the Centre. As for the Empire, I remarked that it rested with the British more than with Indians. We could at most say what position we wished to have in the world ; what we were to have in any particular group of nations was not for us to decide. I added that Britain would not concede India a position in the Empire worthy of her. From this I argued that what Parliament did was of no consequence to us in India because we looked forward to working our own future out. It was, however, of importance to Britons and that was their concern.

There were the usual questions. I passed a note round to Mr. Alexander suggesting that Mrs. Heath be asked to give her impressions. Mrs. Heath idealised the mother and child relationship in India and, afterwards, I mentioned to her that I had heard very similar remarks by Indian women on mothers in England and their children. When I remarked to Mr. Alexander, in an aside, that Mr. Heath was growing more extreme, he smiled and said that he could well believe it as the same thing had happened to him on his return from India.

I was moved by an unexpected display of emotion by Mr. Hoyland after the lecture. As we were walking across to Holland House, Mr. Hoyland placed his hand on my shoulder and

YESTERDAY, TODAY AND FOR EVER

said wistfully, "That map of India which was hung up, made me feel homesick." I had felt the same thing though I had been only away for a few months and I was surprised to see Mr. Hoyland affected that way. But he had been away for twelve years.

After dinner, we met in Mr. Hoyland's rooms for a Fellowship meeting. Mr. Heath gave a frank estimate of the Christian contribution in India. He said that many young Christians were tiring of the attitude of the older people who stood aloof from Hindu and Muslim movements in the country. This, he said, was the great problem facing Indian Christianity. He expressed opposition to Gandhiji's stand against all conversion. It was, he felt, introducing caste into religion. Mr. Hoyland explaining Gandhiji's attitude, which was common to many Hindu thinkers, said that it was probably an outcome of communal electorates. Hindus might well fear that they would dwindle into a minority if conversions took place. He asked "our Indian friend" to throw some light on the subject. To one who was brought up to regard all religions in the same light, I said, it was an easy matter to understand. Conversion, in so far as it was a change of labels, was useless and concentrating on it was a waste of time and, in many cases, of money as well. I said that after all there were so few good Hindus or good Christians that it did not matter very much what they called themselves. The rest made little difference.

Mrs. Heath in an exceedingly human speech stressed the difficulties which all religions are facing in fighting social defects and urged that it was not fair to judge the worst of other faiths by the best in one's own. We had a discussion on missionary work. I was rather surprised to find general agreement on my objection to mission board control from foreign countries. Mr. Heath discussed the relative merits of mass and individual conversion. He felt that mass

WEST OF SUEZ

conversion was better as it saved the convert from persecution. I protested against the persecution argument as unfair to the Hindu. I asked Mr. Heath what he would feel if a young son of his was converted to another faith and was taught to mock at all that his parents held sacred. Mr. Heath said that he was not defending it at all. Only if there was to be conversion, group conversion was better than individual conversion. Eventually we agreed that the best propaganda was for good Christians to preach through their own lives without making a noise about it.

On Sunday another function took place relating to India when Miss Hilda Cashmore spoke of her work in the Central Provinces. Before I left Mrs. Heath presented me with a book of poems written by her, a valued souvenir of Woodbrooke.

Mr. Cadbury, the Warden, is a triune personality. I often thought of him as a modern representation of the triple deity. As Warden of Selly Oak he is the preserver; as a prominent director of Cadbury's Chocolate firm he is a creator ; and as a director—I think managing director—of the *News Chronicle* he is a destroyer. He bears his triple responsibility unostentatiously.

Selly Oak has its conventions. Every one there, except the Warden and the housekeeper, are spoken of by their personal names. It had many of the problems of a co-educational Institution and I had met several Woodbrooke couples abroad. That, however, did not mean anything official. The Warden, I was told, opened the term with a warning to students not to allow any distractions to disturb studies. Saturdays and Sundays are free. It is natural that one gets into a set easily in a friendly centre. I found myself planning long walks through Birmingham with two students, Charles Hocking and Hilton-Brown, and a German professor. It was

YESTERDAY, TODAY AND FOR EVER

with extreme reluctance that we agreed to admit a couple of Norwegian and two Swiss girls to the walks for we feared it would slow the pace and shorten the distance. On Sunday we went into a teashop on the way back. There was a portrait of the Duke of Windsor with the caption "God Save King George VI." Hocking with commendable enterprise slowly peeled off the caption to reveal an earlier inscription to Edward VIII. Shortness of time had necessitated emergency preparations.

I had prolonged my visit beyond my original plan. I left on Tuesday for the Lakes.

III

The station I chose to get down at was Windermere. It was a bright day when I got there and at my hotel I was told that I was exceedingly lucky since the weather had been awful the week before. There was a spell of glorious weather from Tuesday afternoon to Friday morning, the period of my stay there.

A forbidding notice in my room related to a first dinner belt which gave you time to dress. Before unpacking, I went down and asked the proprietress if it was customary to dress there for dinner. She said it depended on individual visitors. I asked, Do the majority? She hesitated and said, No. I replied that that was all right. I had no intention of appearing odd in company, even hotel company, but if there was a general rule, I was fully determined to shift to a more unconventional place. She laughed at that and gave me perfect liberty to do as I pleased.

The lake area abounds with old Anglo-Indians on the eve of retirement. They are on the look-out for a quiet place to settle down in with plenty of fishing. Strange to say they are rather pleased than otherwise to meet an Indian. I was waiting one cloudy morning for a bus to pick me up when an elderly gentleman and his wife came up and told me that it was not

W E S T O F S U E Z

like India. They asked me if I was from Bengal and were rather disappointed to learn that I was not.

The only way of "doing" the districts thoroughly is on foot and that necessarily involves ample time at one's disposal. On the first evening as I strolled out to the lakeside, I was overtaken by a little odd fellow who kept walking by me with a peculiar shuffling trot. He gave a good deal of unnecessary advice on how to avoid the walk round the lake and a considerable amount of autobiography. The autobiography was interesting but it was difficult to believe that he was new to the district when a number of people hailed him on the road and asked where he had got hold of me. For three days he kept me company in the after-dinner strolls I took. I had not the heart to shake him off. He was completely harmless, never insisted on my talking and always kept silent with a "I know how you feel" when I expressed a preference for a quiet walk. It was a matter of indifference to both of us whether the other stayed. As I came down the main road to the promenade on Lake Windermere, he would join me with a "good evening." Returning the same way he would walk a little lower down to a small church and then we would part for the night. He had, I gathered, a feeling that the folks round about were no good; they on their part that he had "not much to say for himself."

I could not make up my mind to travel through the Lake District as a hiker. But I did the next best thing. I toured the district by bus and by car. The locality is rich in literary associations. Wordsworth, Coleridge, De Quincey, Ruskin, Dr. Arnold and Mathew Arnold and, in our own times, Hugh Walpole have given the Lakes to all the English-speaking world. My first tour was by bus and it passed by eight lakes. Few foreign non-English knowing visitors seem to venture beyond London and I do not blame them. We had Americans, Scots and English with us and only two of us were

YESTERDAY, TODAY AND FOR EVER

men. The trip brought us back through Grasmere and Wordsworth territory. One of the women inside requested the gentleman who was going with us to find out before coming back from "Dove Cottage" just exactly what it was that Wordsworth had written. The young man and his wife were busy collecting the titles of Wordsworth's poems inside. This struck me as peculiar. Wordsworth is not exactly highbrow. The woman in the bus had no desire to give herself away before our guide-driver. It was not a clever deception. He told me as he drove me to my hotel that he had met more ignorant folk in his long years of guiding. "Fancy," he said, "only the other day I pointed out the house of Dr. Arnold to a young couple and said that that was the place Mathew Arnold had lived in as a boy. 'George,' asked the girl, 'who is Mathew Arnold?' 'Don't you know?' he replied proudly, 'why he is an international football player.' And the worst of it all was," he ended mournfully, "he was English."

The more interesting visit was through wilder scenery by car, on a thirteen lakes tour. We passed through innumerable gates and one of us had to get off every hundred yards to unfasten a gate to let us through. Besides myself there was a party of four Americans and two English women when we started and a young couple joined us later on. I created a bit of a stir near Lodore when we went to visit the waterfalls. The older Englishwoman asked us if we remembered the words, "Oh how the waters come down at Lodore." Unexpectedly I said I did and I was the only one to admit it. "Fancy your remembering that nursery rhyme," said the cultured one with a look of surprise. "Nursery rhyme?" I questioned out of sheer mischief, "but I read it in James Joyce's 'Ulysses'." There was a gasp and slowly the rest edged away from me. None of them, I am sure, knew anything of the book except that it was banned. But it took them time to recover from this brick.

W E S T O F S U E Z

Twice I drove past Hugh Walpole's house at Brackenburn near Keswick. The guide, as we flashed past, told us tales of American tourists who worry and weary the novelist. There is something to be said, however, for the desire to see the surroundings in which the novelists who write round a district, live. There is little, for instance, in Mr. Walpole's face to account for the sombre mysticism of his later books. The explanation for it lies in Keswick.

Friday began, a cold and sullen morning with little sunshine in it. The lakes had past their best that week. It was futile to linger in the hope of recapturing the smiling hours and it can be very depressing on a dull day. Once more and for the last time, I drove through by bus to Keswick, took train there and reached Edinburgh that evening.

CHAPTER XVIII

THE MONSTER AND OTHER SCOTTISH MEMORIALS

The Scottish people are so dour of access that I would hesitate to say what precisely is their inner attitude.—*Margot Asquith.*

Edinburgh is unique for the British Isles. When I came to it on Friday, June 11, I had little time to take in anything except its great thoroughfare, Princes Street, with its row of shops on one side and its gardens on the other, and the overlooking Castle. I was glad next morning that I had gazed my fill at the Castle. For on Saturday we were enveloped in a Scottish mist. A Continental Anglophile has set the Scots down as an inferior race because he disliked their country. He had taken an aversion to Scotland because the day he went there, there was an awful mist. As I forgave them the mist, I felt I had risen superior to Mr. Cohen-Portheim.

Undaunted by the fearful circumstance but yet shivering in their great-coats, the tourists came out to "see the town." The guide who was proud of his Castle, had allotted us a long forty minutes to appreciate its splendour. We felt it was too much. By the time we had examined the ancient cannon "Mons Meg," and admired St. Margaret's Chapel; looked on the Scottish Regalia in the Crown Room and whispered in wonder in the room where James VI. was born; recaptured the barbaric splendour of old Scotland in the Banqueting Hall and shuddered

W E S T O F S U E Z

in the dungeons below the Argyll Towers ; we heard our guide calling on us to hurry if we wished to look over the War Memorial. It was an impressive monument stone-carved in austere simplicity.

Holyrood Palace was closed to the tourist public until the royal visit was over and we just saw it from the outside. Our guide, however, with imagination surmounted all difficulties. If he could not take us through the rooms, he could tell us all about them. We passed by most of the monuments in the city tour.

The afternoon I gave up to a trip to Melrose, Abbotsford and Dryburgh. At Melrose, there was a little discussion over the tomb of the "great Wizard, Michael Scott" but there was much more when two Canadian girls went off to buy picture postcards and held the whole party up. There was a loud protest against the habits of American tourists.

Melrose Abbey was imposing. Not so Abbotsford at the entrance to which a man in kilts played an incessant bagpipe I like the bagpipe myself on occasion and at a little distance—and when it is not a method of advertisement. Many of my companions reacted unfavourably to the weird noises, and did not hesitate to express their dislike before our patriotic guide.

Sir Walter Scott seems to have been a collector of some persistence and he had filled his house with as many useful and useless odds and ends as a schoolboy does his little desk—with more profit to his posterity, of course. Once more we waited to collect the Canadians who were posting their cards, and we set out for Dryburgh. Shedding a hasty tear over the graves of Walter Scott and Earl Haig, two English ladies in our party hurried to the bus "to set a good example to the Americans." I had gained half an hour over the rest of my party by foregoing my tea. Seeing some of my

THE MONSTER AND OTHER SCOTTISH MEMORIALS

party guideless, I hastened with my book to their assistance. The discussion on the way back was mainly of the barbarity of a past age which thought little of destroying Abbeys and Churches. When the condemnation of this brutality had died down, I asked if we were any better today. After a modern bombing, there will be no ruins for coming generations to visit.

I put myself down for a four-day Highland tour on Monday and devoted Sunday to seeing a little more of Edinburgh environs. This time I took a taxi. It was a busy morning. I went to Craigmillar Castle which was closed, to Roslin Chapel which had a service in it, and Roslin Castle which possessed in the twelfth century a lift, a speaking tube to the kitchen and the largest fireplace of them all. Returning I visited the swimming beach at Porto Bello. In the evening I walked through the town.

And there were the churches, the interiors of which we visited with more than religious enthusiasm. I think I can feel some pride in doing well by Edinburgh. On Monday morning I started on my Highland tour, returned to Edinburgh on Thursday evening.

Always on a tour like my Highland tour, there is as much interest in the persons going with you as in the sights outside, often in fact more. The soul of our party was an elderly Scottish gentleman and his wife and daughter. The old man used to sleep from point to point wrapped in a rug. A young South African, two English women and the guide-driver completed this modest group. The first pause the bus made, we drifted away from each other. No one was in a mood for conversation. When we got back the old Scot told me to look out carefully as we had now passed the worst part of the journey.

I had determined on cultivating the South African as the only unattached member of the party. At Perth I found myself

W E S T O F S U E Z

sharing the lunch-table with a young Scot settled in England on a two-day tour, whom I mistook for the South African. He took me round and showed me at my request the local church, the house of the Fair Maid of Perth, the window out of which the young hero jumped, and the place where the Battle of the Clans was fought. We parted with a promise to meet at Aberdeen.

Going to Aberdeen we passed Barrie territory and were shown the birthplace of Sir J. M. Barrie and the "Window in Thrums." The first spark of animation shown by our old companion was when we were nearing Aberdeen. He told me all about the city of granite and the fish market which I should not miss, and the best walks in the place. I liked Aberdeen and as we did the city, my friend of the two-day tour and myself, we found ourselves returning time and again to the massive elegance of Mareschal's College.

My companion had two main desires to fulfil. One was to stay till midnight to see how long the twilight lasted. We were up till 11-30 and it was bright till then. Secondly, to follow the Gordon Highlanders who had just come to Aberdeen, to their barracks. There was a din of brass-bands and bagpipes as the regiment marched along. We must have kept up with them for the better part of an hour. I realised for the first time how the Scots react to the bagpipe. The children were dancing along the roads, the elders looking on with pride. Everyone was keeping up with the soldiers. My companion could scarcely restrain himself. In appearance a man of peace, if ever there was one, his flushed face and sparkling eyes bore witness to the primitive instincts roused by the strange music. He told me that I was particularly fortunate to hear so fine a band. For fear of being left behind, he would break into a trot. Then he would remember me and turn back to call me to where he was.

THE MONSTER AND OTHER SCOTTISH MEMORIALS

Thus we reached the "auld Brig," said to have been built seven hundred years ago and still in use. It was a picturesque spot. Passing by a few churches we felt particularly interested in one and inquired of a passer-by what it was. He said he did not know what the "blasted" building was. I told my companion that evidently he did not worship there. I was solemnly told that my interpretation of the word "blasted" was not all that it should be. In London, said my informant, "blasted" is a strong term. Here, "damned" was banned but "blasted" was quite the thing. It is needless to say that I had used the word "damned" earlier in our talk and I had felt a rebuke coming. To oblige him I accepted Scottish custom and dropped the (to them) more objectionable word.

We did the fish-market, with reluctance on my part, on the morning of the 15th. I was glad to be out of it. The smell of fish is not at any time a pleasant one. At 7 in the morning on an empty stomach it can be vile.

We had all thawed by the time we left Aberdeen. The woman caretaker at Elgin Cathedral helped to bring us closer together. By the time we reached the end of the second day and Inverness, we were all friends. Inverness was a personal triumph to me. After dinner, I was waiting for my South African companion when I saw two women making frantic signs of recognition in my direction from the lounge. At any place unusual, it was a phenomenon west of Suez, and I ignored it at first. Then I knew it must be some persons I had met on a previous city tour. I waved back and went over to make sure. It was the two Edinburgh Canadians warming themselves before the hotel fire. I asked them if they had seen Inverness. They had not. I said I was just going to view the cemetery. They too wanted to see the cemetery. This was an awkward predicament. My South African friend, I thought, was a bashful

W E S T O F S U E Z

man who would not like to cart women along with him on a sight-seeing expedition. Besides I did not feel confident of my ability to reveal the sights of Inverness. I said that I must be going and they agreed mournfully. It struck me as rather hard on them and I asked the South African if he had any objection. To my surprise he was almost eager to have them. I had no excuse now for rudeness.

I went back and invited the two to join our party, asked the Canadians and the South African to introduce themselves, and warned them not to grumble if they got lost in looking at places in Inverness. It was, I said, a small place and we could always get back to the hotel 'some time. And so we set out.

At the cemetery another setback awaited us; the gates closed at nine each night. And it was a quarter to, already. I told them we might as well go in and see what we could. In the graveyard they thawed sufficiently to discuss Scottish manners and the Canadians were much amused at the use of the phrase "wee bonnie" by their Scottish hosts. Having worked them to a happy mood we decided that, as much was excused to the American tourist, the Canadians should do the explaining to the gatekeeper. The women put up a feeble protest that it was easier for me to pretend that I did not know English. But no excuses were necessary. We got out quietly at 9-30. All of them, frivolous colonials that they were, had a passion for the circus, and, as we walked past one, they wished to get in. Luckily they were too late. I walked them off their feet before we returned to our rooms at 12. I was not feeling sleepy ; nor was the other gentleman ; and the two girls were waiting till the lounge was deserted to gather a couple of hotel ash-trays as souvenirs, a peculiar mania which has bitten many a tourist from North America. Inverness is fortunately small. I had done the city thoroughly by the time we took the road to Onich.

THE MONSTER AND OTHER SCOTTISH MEMORIALS

The old Scotsman showed little enthusiasm in the abbeys and churches. In fact he told me curtly that, as he was not on church boards, he was ignorant of the nice distinctions between church and church. But he brightened up as we came to Loch Ness and inquired whether any of us wanted to see the monster. We were, to put it quite modestly, all of us quite capable of seeing not one monster but two. Yet this question took our breath away. No one had suspected the old man of superstition. He took me by the arm and asked me to prepare myself at the bar for the miracle. There was a bar at either end of the lake and a monster between. For the rest of the day the topic was the monster and nothing else. I had the privilege of talking to a boatman who claimed to have seen the monster. He was less able to describe it than we who had not seen it.

The hotel at Onich was staffed by old men who could scarcely move about. To them my presence was a grave shock and one particularly decrepit fellow kept a close eye on me lest I run off with the spoons. When I ordered something, he looked even more suspiciously at me. When he heard I was vegetarian, he nearly fainted. One of the ladies asked in a low whisper, what had happened to that man. I replied aloud that he had probably mistaken me for the Loch Ness monster.

Vegetarianism on my Highland tour was not a success. A waiter who offered to fix me, did so with an omelette, fish to follow and worse probably if I survived ; that omelette was the size of a gramophone plate (large size) ; of an imposing thickness, it tasted like a cross between a cake of soap and yesterday's *chapatti*. I took just a piece and called to the waiter to take it off. Even the butter smelt non-vegetarian. He asked if I wanted anything more. I had had more than enough. My party sympathised with me, not so much because I was hungry as because I was not getting my money's worth.

W E S T O F S U E Z

Some of the wildest and most picturesque scenery fell on our programme on the third and fourth days. The old Scot told us glowing tales of his earlier travel in these very parts in a horse carriage. We passed by the village in which he had lived as a boy. By special arrangement with the guide-driver we were driven past it, and there were relations of his still living there. When he came back, he sat silent for a while. Then he turned to me and said "The whole place is changed in these fifty years." I nodded in silence. We had long discussions on all kinds of subjects. The Scot was a thinker in patches. He thought that the Indian freedom movement was, like the Scottish Home Rule one, eminently unreasonable. He nearly lost his temper when I pointed out how many plums in the Empire cake had fallen to the Scots. It was, I felt, a case of England demanding Home Rule rather than Scotland. His sense of humour and the desire to tell me a good story calmed him down. A young Scotsman, he said, was asked on his return from England how he liked the English. "English?" said the boy contemptuously. "I never saw any English. I called only on heads of departments."

I was rather perplexed by the vast acres of lands owned by Scottish peers, many of whom have accepted positions of honour away from their country and can scarce take a personal interest. Others have taken up a small corner of an ancient and dilapidated castle and earn a useful penny by having the rest of the place shown to visitors and by the sale of light refreshments near by. But no one seemed to think that there was anything wrong in such an arrangement or that it could be better managed.

With the whole world learning English, the British have developed an exclusive sixth sense which they believe needs interpreting to outsiders—the British sense of humour. He would be a bold man who would attempt to disentangle the

THE MONSTER AND OTHER SCOTTISH MEMORIALS . .

Scottish element from it. Often on the tour we came across notices of danger ahead followed, after the peril was passed, by the ominous words, "You have been warned." I won the hearts of my companions at first by letting them explain this great joke over and over again; then lost popularity by wanting to know why so much paint had been wasted and wood, in setting up the second notice.

It interested me to learn that one of the best bits of road just beyond Onich, had been constructed by German prisoners—during the War." Goering perhaps got his road-building scheme from this.

II .

Scotland is different. The cleanest cities may be found in Germany. The territory of the old Austro-Hungarian Empire might contain the prettiest cities in Europe. Scandinavian towns may well claim first place as the finest results of art and nature combined. But to none of them goes the honour of separating the good and the ugly, I do not say evil, between two towns. If Edinburgh is all Jekyll, Glasgow appeared to me, when I came to it on Thursday evening (June 17), to be all Hyde. This was my first impression and later I found that my first impression was not entirely justified. Even Glasgow has its charms.

Yet it is wise to seek the good in Glasgow in its parks, in its Necropolis, in the old town untouched by industrialism. In the busy city, the Municipal Buildings form an imposing and ornate structure the interior of which is of surprising magnificence. On Friday morning, I set out for George Square to drive by bus to the Cathedral and the Necropolis. The driver of the first bus I approached told me not to go away without seeing the Municipal Buildings. He said that he knew how the tourist always leaves little things over to the last and goes away

W E S T O F S U E Z

without seeing them. He said that I could visit the buildings and take a bus an hour later.

I followed his advice. Then I went to the Cathedral. I did not realise that I had spent a good half hour inside. Another fifteen minutes were taken up in the oldest house in Glasgow, Provand's Lordship. The Necropolis took much longer to see. It is beautifully situated on elevated ground and has a commanding view of the surroundings. The monument of John Knox dominates the scene. Glasgow has done well by its dead—better probably than by its citizens. If it is any consolation to know that one's body after death is laid in a spacious grave-yard with plenty of light and air, the dead Glasgavians have it. In many a Scottish town, I was reminded by contrast of the Jewish cemetery in Prague where space was limited and the graves packed close between.

In the Necropolis there is no depression. The tombs are decorated in varied forms, with a good sprinkling of Eastern styles. The unbuilt space is like a public park and it takes a long time to walk through the dead city, even if one did not stop by the structures set up to ensure a temporal immortality. It was a gardener in the Necropolis who suggested that my time could scarcely be better spent in Glasgow than in visiting the parks in and just outside the city. Friday evening and the early half on Saturday I devoted to the parks, and the University.

I spent Friday afternoon in Queen's Park which being nearest to the city (in the South) is a popular recreation ground for women and children. Even for a Friday evening it was crowded and in the pond within, children floated paper-boats whilst their nurses and mothers (and a few fathers, too) kept guard over them. Time can pass quickly in a garden and a little after 3, I took the bus to Rouken Glen Park, advertised as the most picturesque of Glasgow's possessions. It was a park

THE MONSTER AND OTHER SCOTTISH MEMORIALS

of colossal dimensions and, laid out with considerable beauty, it was a park of which any city might well be proud. There were barely a dozen people when I went in but as I left in the evening there was a steady stream of people flowing in.

Linn Park was the last halt that day. A feature common to most of the parks was the golf course. Golf, I was told, was a popular game in Glasgow but no one mentioned how the problem of expense was got over. Admission to the more exclusive golf clubs, I understood, was a difficult matter and many members put down the names of their sons for membership as soon as they were born! My old friend of the four-day-Highland tour with exaggerated humour told me that this was a ceremony second in importance only to baptism and very often not even to that.

Coming back to town, I was told by the bus-conductor that a girl had been drowned in the river and the people were looking for her body. He followed this information with much philosophy. Even the Scots have to talk and, as they are averse to it among themselves, they pick on the foreigner. Hence they appear more hospitable than those born on the wrong side of the Tweed. As part of my journeys to the parks was done on foot, I saw a good bit of the modern suburbs of Glasgow.

. On Saturday, I got through the University buildings (exterior) and hastened to the hotel to pack for my departure. My hotel attendants advised me to take an earlier train to the Burns country and, as Ayr was a small place, I took their advice.

III

What was it in Ayr that struck me as similar to Stratford-upon-Avon? There is a difference—as there is bound to be—between the two places. The similarity was, if anything, extraneous to the town itself. If Ayr and Stratford had anything in common, it was somewhat like a string on which beads

W E S T O F S U E Z

are strung. It was the posthumous commercialisation of a great man.

I had a good three hours to spend in Ayr and because of the bus facilities, I was able to see the sights fairly well. I took the Burns Monument first. As I was coming out of it, I read a notice above the door-keeper's built-in gate while I was conversing with him, "Visitors are requested to ring the bell." Always obliging, I stretched my hand out and, before he realised what I was after, rang the bell. For half a second, he was stupefied. Then he could not find words suitable enough, between politeness and rebuke, to pull me up for what I had done. When I urged that I had only carried out instructions, he looked distressed and said that all the people inside, the memorial custodians, would now come running up.

And so they did. It was well worth it. For I now learnt that the memorial was guarded mainly by a family. He had some difficulty in telling them that "this gentleman had rung the bell wrongly." I asked him why that printed notice had been hung up and he admitted that it was a mistake. It was meant for the hours when he himself was away.

To be frank, I learnt more about Burns that afternoon than I had ever cared to know before. With a young man and his wife and little child, I made my way to Burn's Cottage. To my credit, be it said, I found the cottage before the others and also the entrance to the cottage. The young man addressed several remarks to me which I could not understand but which required no answer except a shaking of the head and a miserable face. In the cottage there were many women crowded round a corner which held the bed in which the poet was born and, from the emotion it evoked in them, one would have thought the Burns baby was still lying in it.

THE MONSTER AND OTHER SCOTTISH MEMORIALS

I have here to record a most unfortunate accident. By the Cottage there is a museum with many precious Burns relics in it. As you go in, you have to turn left for the Museum. I went in and turned right, into a little old-fashioned room with a bare table, a few chairs and a mirror. "What," I wondered, "had Burns done here?" As I came out still perplexed, I nearly collided at the door against two women who glared ferociously at me.

Outside, I found the reason. There was a small notice which read to those who got to it, "Women's Dressing-room." My complexion fortunately precludes blushing. For the future I made a resolution never to enter a museum-room without first reading what is on the outside. The museum-rooms were across a small narrow corridor and as I passed the exhibits my mind was but half on the things I saw. That was why it took me longer to finish the museum than it would otherwise have done. The two women kept an eye on me all the time I was there and I was often kept from bursting into a laugh by fear of being reported to the caretaker and held back from my journey to Belfast.

My long inspection of the museum pieces, however, created a good impression on the other visitors who felt personally honoured (even when they looked next to illiterate) by the interest shown in their national poet. I edged slowly away from the Museum, out into the street, on to a bus and off to the station. There was yet an hour and more to go before the train came in. I went out once more in the other direction. I saw what little there was in Ayr, looked into the many secondhand shops offering bargains of early Burns books and, returning to the station, went in for tea to the railway hotel.

CHAPTER XIX

A DIVIDED NATION

Holy and beautiful is the soul of Catholic Ireland: her prayers are loelier than the teeth and claws of Protestantism, but not so effective in dealing with the English.—*George Bernard Shaw.*

It was a quiet journey from Ayr to Stranraer, a quiet crossing from Stranraer to Larne. But the train from Larne to Belfast was over-crowded and my porter with friendly interest elbowed me into an empty first class compartment, brought the conductor to my carriage, and asked me to explain. I did.

The conductor looked suspiciously at me, read an air journey label on my suitcase, felt the money was safe and told me to see him at Belfast. Just as the train was about to start, five men rushed in and seated themselves. With the whistle they took out a pack of cards and were soon absorbed in a furious game. One of them told me that they were all Scots going to Belfast and that they did not like Ireland. He invited me to join in the game but I excused myself on the ground that I did not understand what they were playing.

A misunderstanding ensued which I did nothing to dispel, and they explained to me what each of the fifty-two cards were. Then they asked me to join them again and I once more refused “as I could not remember all that they had told me.” There was here an exchange of rather uncomplimentary remarks on my

A DIVIDED NATION

intelligence through which I kept a blank face. It was not my fault if they felt I was little conversant with the language.

As Belfast approached they insisted on shaking hands with me one after the other. Yet they managed to get away from the carriage by the time we reached the platform. I went up to the guard and offered to pay the difference between first and third. He took me to another official and all of us then went to the station-master. This high dignitary inquired if there had been room in the third. The guard said there was not and this was more than I could have vouched for. The station-master graciously let me off the difference.

It was a late hour in the night and even the station hotel was hard put to it to provide something to eat. There seemed little point in venturing out on the road at night. Early in the morning, however, I started out to do Belfast. Fortunately I was toying with the idea of going to the Giant's Causeway, which would have involved my retracing my steps from Belfast to the north. I went to the railway station and getting hold of two station officials on the platform, (being Sunday the offices were all closed), asked them what chance there was of my going to the Giant's Causeway and returning in a day. I was told that it would not be possible. In the alternative it was suggested to me that I should invest in a tourist all-day tram ticket for a shilling and see Belfast. I was also given a list of places that I should see.

It was all very interesting but the ticket nearly got me into trouble. No tram-conductor had seen such a thing before and they all scrutinised it closely when I presented it for inspection. One man actually felt he should get me off the car but restrained himself when he saw I had paid a shilling. He told me with a smile that I would not get my money's worth out of the ticket. He did not know me.

WEST OF SUEZ

The man who sold the ticket to me at Castle Junction became my guide. I generally asked him where a particular tram went and the names of the main buildings on the route. He would point the route out on a map I had. Then I would go off in it and, if it ended in a park, get down, stroll round and take the next tram back to Castle Junction and to my guide. This circuitous way would have been difficult but for the cheap ticket. Moreover I was able to devote one journey to one side and the return to the other, generally speaking.

Sunday is enforced as a day of rest in all Ireland with due vigour. Everything was closed. I spent a pleasant hour in the gardens round the North Ireland Parliament, a building which deserves a bigger country. I saw the race-track for the international motor races. As I saw Queen's University, the City Hall, and the buildings on Queen Street, I felt that there was nothing but the accident of a sea which separates Ireland from the northern half of the British Isles. When I got to Southern Ireland, the Free States, I knew that the sea had been misplaced. Ulster linked to Scotland but separated from the rest of Ireland, could have been happy. There are few towns which impressed me less favourably than Belfast did.

Belfast can look very beautiful from places and, no doubt, to those who live in it, it has a special charm. But I felt it was rather prosaic and very much unwashed.

II

The journey to Dublin is through even wilder scenery than the Scottish Highland scene. It is difficult to put in words but the hills are more rugged and life is simpler in Ireland than it is even in Scotland. There was a diversion in my carriage when two passengers started discussing whether the window be left open or closed for the journey. The less well-dressed of the two urged his right to have the window down because he "too had bought a ticket."

A DIVIDED NATION

As I shared the responsibility for keeping the window open with a rather well-dressed young man, the occupant of the corner across who was cursed with a supercilious look, I came in for my share of abuse. I followed my fellow-culprit's example and kept a none too dignified silence. This in no way perturbed our angry traveller who found plenty of material to grumble about. As a matter of fact, I went to sleep for the last hour of the journey and woke up to find him still muttering threats. We had to endure the Customs men before entering Southern territory. That I had to go to the luggage-van to have my suitcase checked, in no way troubled me, but it gave a subtle satisfaction to the complaining passenger.

In keeping with my usual practice I took a hotel across the road and having been allotted a room went out again for dinner to the station restaurant. Several men were round the counter apparently having drinks. But I was solemnly informed by the bar-woman that the place was closed for Sunday. The men looked aghast at me for my temerity. As I stepped out of the station, I was harassed by a number of beggars who surrounded me, among them many children. At my hotel I was able to dine but not to sleep that night. It is possible that I was growing more fastidious but I was not finding it easy to adjust myself to my surroundings. When I came down for breakfast in the morning and found the maid in the breakfast-room come forth with half a bun in her hand and the other half in her mouth, I decided that the democratic spirit looked better from a distance. I packed my things and left for more conventional lodgings.

My next visit was to the Gresham Hotel but they had no room. They were full up because a number of clergymen had come up to Dublin to be ordained and they had taken all the available space. They were kind enough, however, to put me on to the Royal Hibernian which they said was equally good. It

W E S T O F S U E Z

was. I must record my gratitude to my dining-room waiter who swore with Irish fervour that "as long as you are at my table, you shall have great dinners." He kept his word. The human touch was also evident in the notice on the corridors asking guests not to make "unnecessary" noise in the corridors after 11 p. m.

After I had fixed my room my next interest was to get on to the city tour. The reception clerk was quick in fixing this, but the tourist car was slow in having me picked up. The driver was obliging enough to tell me all that I had missed while we drove to the University. My party was standing between the statues of Burke and Goldsmith when I joined it. By an irreverent freak my mind retains four main pictures of this tour. First is the simple grave of Michael Collins, a place of pilgrimage to Irish men and women. Then come the beautiful botanical gardens. Third is the little Government store which advertises Irish Free State products, an attempt at organised marketing which follows the methods of the Naples guides. And last, an old American woman who was travelling on a "mission of goodwill." She was a poet who had turned out some "universal lyrics" and what not. It was my constant dread that she would burst into song at any moment. My fears were groundless.

The honour of possessing the widest road in Europe is contested by Germany (Unter Den Linden), Scotland (Princes Street), and the Irish Free Street (O'Connell Street). For all it worried me, any of them might take the palm. But in each city the local guide claimed to have actually measured the roads or almost as much. On the historic side of Dublin there is much to be said. As most of it has taken place in recent years, it needs no mention.

In the afternoon I had an appointment with Mr. J. T. Gwynn who has a school at Dollymount. It was a pleasure

A DIVIDED NATION

to see him and to have a couple of hours with him there. The school he was conducting reminded me very much of the Swedish school in Stockholm I had been taken over by Mr. Thungvist.

There was excitement in the public streets on Monday because O'Duffy's men were returning from the Spanish War. My hotel attendant had a friend in the O'Duffy brigade and he told me that the reason given him for their return was that the War was now practically "over." He gave as his own opinion that they were really tired of playing heroes abroad and had come back to play heroes at home. Some of them had lost a leg or a hand; all of them attracted crowds of both sexes. They were due to speak somewhere that evening but I was not interested enough to go to the meeting-place.

The next day I took the tour to the Vale of Avoca—"the Vale in whose bosom the two waters meet." Moore when he immortalised this spot in verse, referred to his own personal feeling; from his poem one gathers that it was not so much because of the landscape as of the friends he had there. The tourist agencies have commercialised his sentiment. There is a tree against which Moore is said to have leant, rested his book or something, which is now nailed off to protect the souvenir-collector from his greed.

We had with us that morning an Indian gentleman who spent most of the time telling us all that India had better scenery but that Indians did not talk about it so much. He looked annoyed when he found me watching him intently the fourth time he said this and, the Irish air having made him aggressive, asked me why I did so. I said that it was surprise at his un-Indian "talking about it all the time" which had taken my breath away.

He was not entirely incapable of appreciating things un-Indian. We had tea at a little tourist place and he was rather

W E S T O F S U E Z

taken up with the good looks of the young woman who served us. When he asked her if she was Irish, my obtuse mind did not appreciate the niceties of the position. This was followed by a would-be-subtle remark to the obvious reply of the girl that he had inferred as much from her innate elegance and charm. I told him that it was stupid to ask the question in such a typically rural Irish spot. He informed me that it was a "method of approach." Most decidedly not a successful method since the rustic beauty gave a scared look and ignoring a further compliment to her Irish eyes, dashed hurriedly in and never appeared outside again.

My companion who had a philosophic strain in him as well, drew my attention to the inherent virtues of the rural, Roman Catholic, simple Irish woman, who spurns the approaches of the pursuing male. It had rather appeared to me to be fright at seeing an elephant emulate the frisky gambols of the goat. But this was one of the rare occasions when I did not say what I thought. He had a passion for hearing Erse spoken and mistook the words addressed to each other by two men in a local bus for that language. I told him it sounded like German. But he did not accept my word. I referred to the gentlemen to his horror; and they said it was. When we parted in the evening, he offered to help me in Paris.

The Roman Catholic influence is strong in the Irish Free State and its power was due, I was told, to the fact that the priests came from the middle and lower classes. As such they stood for a form of democracy. The conflict between the priestly class and the poor which exists elsewhere, did not exist now in Ireland and was not likely to grow up later. Besides the fact that the Roman Catholic priest had played a not inactive part in the Irish revolution, had given him a certain prestige. It is also true that the domination of the priest in the Free State keeps the North Irish people away from Union.

A DIVIDED NATION

There had been practically no opposition to the process by which the property of the larger landholders had been turned over to more national uses. Thus the politics and the intense religious spirit of the Irish people marched hand in hand throughout.

The attempt at changing the language of the people to Erse has not, so far as I could make out, been a remarkable success. The only person who could speak Gaelic and Gaelic alone, was an Irish girl whom I saw running a stall in the Paris Exhibition. In the Free State itself, there are many who can speak only English. They are, it is true, the older generation. Their children speak both Erse and English. Ireland has a large population outside the Free State and it cannot cut itself off from this completely. One of the few things which Ireland "exports" in large quantities is its priests. If the competition from the United States is to be met—and even now it is large enough to alarm the Irish—they must be taught English. With the influence which the Roman Catholic priesthood has over the educational system, English has every prospect of remaining as the second official language for a long time to come. The clauses in the new constitution relating to education, would seem to bear this out.

Wednesday morning I spent in Phoenix Park. I did not walk all the time but engaged a quaint vehicle—an adaptation of our *ekka*. The spot where the famous Phoenix Park murders (1882) took place are now unmarked by stone or bronze but passing visitors keep the memory of Cavendish and Burke alive by scratching crosses on the ground with sticks and umbrellas. I visited the Irish Parliament on Thursday morning and the museums. It took me a long time to find the historical section and I was misdirected into the natural history museum.

In the afternoon I left for London.

CHAPTER XX

INCIDENTS AND INDIVIDUALS

Indian youths in England felt ashamed to confess that they were married. There was also another reason for dissembling, namely that, in the event of the fact being known, it would be impossible for the young men to go about or flirt with the young girls of the family in which they lived.—*Mahatma Gandhi.*

On the 25th of June (Thursday afternoon) I came to London again. At my travel agents' I learn that my heavy luggage had been sent ahead to Paris. I collected my mail and set out in search of hotel accommodation.

I had reason to congratulate myself on having followed the more conventional course of reserving rooms in advance on my other visits, through agents or through friends. First I had put up at the Abbotsford Hotel—a staid old establishment more familiar to me after the Lake District and Scotland. I wanted something which was not quite so stiff in the joints.

The second time I was comfortable at a boarding house on Gordon Street. It was an invaluable experience as it showed me how the Indian student lived in London. But a little more elasticity, I felt would be welcome.

I threw myself on the mercy of the taxi-driver. I do not remember the names of the hotels we visited that day. But they were six and all in the East End. At every one of them, I was told by the doorkeeper—I must apologise for this slightly Arabian Nights' designation but

INCIDENTS AND INDIVIDUALS

it serves my purpose better than any other term would and there is an Arabian Nights' touch about the English attendant—that there was plenty of room inside and I was told inside that there was no room free. I would hesitate to infer from this that I was kept out because I was an Indian. In fact in one case the woman in control actually directed me to a hotel across the road which might have a room. I rejected it, as I told her, "on principle." She looked puzzled. I explained that the red paint gave me the creeps. It was, indeed, a terrible red. It would have subdued even a revolutionary.

There is an end, however, to even the good things of life and the taxi-driver who had prepared to reap a rich harvest from the unique combination of my eccentricity and the fullness of the hotels, managed appropriately enough to settle me at the Terminus Hotel. Taking no chances, this time I sent him in to fix the room and followed after the preliminary negotiations were over.

How different seems the London hotel once you are in it! The very coldness of the fort's exterior makes it all the surer when once you are in. And there was another pleasant discovery awaiting me. For the traveller who comes from the Irish Free State, there is a special welcome waiting. My hotel manager was Irish and I had carried across the frontier three Irish newspapers for which he put in a claim. When I handed it to the maid to be given to him, she told me that she too was Irish and that for her also the papers had an interest.

I was feeling unaccountably tired on Friday and I believe I did little except the National Gallery in the afternoon. I had written to Mr. Gray to fix a day for calling on him to say good-bye and I intended to arrange my other appointments round that. On Friday night, however, I felt when I came back to my hotel that I was running a fairly troublesome temperature. Probably had I been to a doctor, it would have been "influenza."

W E S T O F S U E Z

On Saturday things seemed even worse than the day before. Not wishing to take up anything strenuous I went to Madame Tussaud's. There was some public interest in the wax figures of the Duke of Windsor and the Duchess whose recent marriage had been signalised by placing the two figures side by side and reclothing them. The wax models are, to my mind, successful in so far as they represent types. When they portray celebrities, they seem to fail. If the European leaders of today were half as grotesque as the Tussaud figures show them, Europe would be a more peaceful continent. Every time I saw Gandhiji's wax representation I wondered at what angle the modeller had caught him to perpetrate this uninspired unlikeness.

I had a strange experience at the historic group of General Gordon at Khartoum. Gordon is standing ready for anything with a sprinkling of Arabs ready to do his bidding. His batman lies dead before him, I believe, and several wax Arabs dead on the floor by his side. The whole group is set in a ring excepting one old Arab who stands outside the ropes with a waxen hand resting on them and peering in to add realism. Unable to breathe life into the wax figures, Tussaud's have done the next best thing. They have dimmed all the lights in this section—the over-imaginative now can even see the figures breathing.

I wanted to know the details of the Gordon group and I moved behind the Arab figure to read my catalogue. An American voice from a little distance in front came to me, "Look at that now; an Arab in modern dress. Is'nt it cute?" The second lady looked rapt in admiration. I kept rigid not wishing to spoil their pleasure.

But second thoughts prevailed. I remembered the old Roman Senator who was pulled by the beard for disguising himself as a statue. Waxworks, of course, have to be handled

INCIDENTS AND INDIVIDUALS

more delicately but one never knew what these people might do. I moved forward. A subdued shriek followed by hysterical giggles went up from the two. They eyed me for a time, unable to decide whether I was a poor specimen of a human being or the latest development in waxwork art.

I could hardly stand when I got out of the place. At the hotel the very walls of my room seemed to offend. I shifted on Sunday morning to a hotel in Sloane Square. Here too several attendants were from the Irish Free State and they paid me special attention.

It was while I was doing the Lake Districts that it had first occurred to me to go back home. I had just finished the eight-lakes tour and was re-reading my Indian mail in bed. There was one letter from home in particular giving me both good news and bad. And I put the letters aside and lazily reviewed the situation. I had told my people I would return in four months when I left Bombay. I had told my friends abroad that I was going back in September and as a preliminary I had broken the news in a letter to my father telling him that I proposed attending an important conference in Paris. The only one who really knew my intentions, was Mr. Harvey with whom I had conspired to stay in Europe till the end of October. What was it to be?

I smiled to myself as I contemplated the three possibilities. And there was the fourth, a visit to the United States under the aegis of Kedarnath Das-Gupta. This had no appeal for me, to be frank. Suddenly like a flash it came upon me. I had received news that week which showed me that things had not stood still in India while I loafed round Europe. The sooner I got back home the better. This might have been the voice that spoke to Paul on the Damascus road, over-eating or just a feeling of ennui after going through museums and churches, castles and abbeys by the score. But it decided me.

W E S T O F S U E Z

Leaving just a month for seeing Europe. I booked my berth on the m. v. Victoria sailing from Genoa on July 22. Why had I chosen to return by the boat in which I came? There were three reasons. The first was that it was the earliest Italian boat returning to India (two others had been cancelled in June); second, I liked the bar-room steward with whom I had thrown dice for cigars, ties and in fact for everything but alcoholic drinks and lost on the way out; thirdly, because there were a couple of fellows travelling on the next boat whom I did not like to have as companions for eleven days.

There was an Indian gentleman whom I met at a restaurant who told me that he was returning to India by the Italian boat which sailed on August 5, and that I would be extremely lucky if I too could secure accommodation on that boat. As we had both gone together, he was anxious to go back also the same way. I said that I was leaving by the earlier boat which sailed from Genoa on the 22nd of July. He was confident that I would not succeed in securing a berth. I spent a good part of my time on Monday and Tuesday fixing this up and I was successful.

He had by his side a huge bag full of all sorts of things. When I asked him what that was, a cunning look came into his eye. He told me he had bought £ 4 worth of goods at Woolworth's for three or six pence and proposed to distribute them as presents among his friends. He asked me what I was taking back. He was horrified when I told him there was nothing to take home for me. I have a very poor appreciation of my social duties.

Thursday July 1, I bade good-bye to London and crossed over into Paris. Mr. Das-Gupta, an exceedingly superstitious very much distressed at my doing anything on

INCIDENTS AND INDIVIDUALS

a Thursday afternoon. He even hinted darkly at a possible accident. I was very much worn out and I did not trouble to argue with him because my mind was made up and, even had Mr. Das-Gupta won the debate, I would have stuck to my programme. I am sorry that my attitude gave Mr. Das Gupta the impression that I was weakening. One thing did amuse me and that was his suggestion in all good faith that I should go to America with him and stay there for another two or three months. Mr. Das-Gupta who could not believe that the time of my returning to India was of my own choosing, insisted on cabling Bombay for permission. I was confident that there would be only one reply—leaving it to me. And it was not worth while to wait for it. I think it was only when the train drew out of the station that he realised I was serious about leaving.

II

I came into Paris on July 2. There are disadvantages in visiting a city where you have friends. The chances of getting lost seeing places are nil and no one can claim to know a city unless he has lost his way once at least. The Harveys were busy during most of the time I was in Paris on my second visit but they seemed somehow able to fit in a lot of work into a day. In fact when Mr. Harvey told me just before I left that he regretted not having had more time to spend with me, I was rather surprised because I had a feeling that I had taken up quite a lot of their time. My one grievance against him was the lecture he had fixed me for.

The "talk" was for Thursday the 8th of July. We were at dinner. People came trickling in from the Centre to tell Mr. Harvey that the audience had arrived. Mr. Harvey hurried through his food—or rather got up in the middle of it and went out. He returned in fifteen minutes to tell me that they were all waiting. What would happen, I asked, if I

W E S T O F S U E Z

took a little longer? Mr. Harvey looked questioningly at me. Would the audience go away, I continued—nothing would have suited me better. Mr. Harvey gave a half-hearted laugh. I asked him to go and introduce the speaker and said that I would follow. Mrs. Harvey said that she appreciated the spirit I had shown but she was glad to see that Mr. Harvey was more responsible.

Disaster overtook me when I was walking across. The notes I had laboriously compiled were unpaged and they were mixed up. After talking from the notes for a page I found that I had no clue to the next point. Admitting my sad predicament to a sympathetic audience I went on. Lecturing is always a nuisance. Once one gets over the thrill of holding a group of people silent while you drivel at them, there is a monotonous period when you grow to hate the sound of your own voice. Mr. Harvey, however, has trained his group well. By not the flicker of an eyelash, not by one stifled yawn, did they reveal that they were fed up. For my part, I was feeling shamelessly sleepy. But my own thoughts, completely unconnected with the lecture, kept me awake. Madame Morin congratulated me on the great improvement I had shown since my last effort at the Centre. It was thoroughly undeserved.

I was well looked after in Paris. When I was not with the Harveys : I was with Madame Morin. On this second Paris visit I was free from one anxiety. Madame Morin had appeared so enthusiastic about things Indian that I was afraid that I should let down the country in her eyes, and afraid too that I could do nothing else. Now I knew that she was one of the few people who had so "Indianised" themselves that she could see the defects for what they were. It was always a thing I looked forward to, after a talk at the Centre, to hear what Madame Morin had to say about my quaint behaviour at the talk I gave, while I told her how I reacted to the peculiarities of

INCIDENTS AND INDIVIDUALS

the audience. Before I performed I tried my best to keep Madame Morin out to ensure a less critical audience.

Madame Morin has a remarkable gift for telling you home-truths without hurting your feelings. She often deflates but never pricks a balloon. In consequence you find yourself once again in her company rising to your full stature. I could think of few better ways of settling to the climate of Europe, than to spend an hour or so with Madame Morin. I recognised in her the laboratory instincts of the French novelists for getting their characters mentally X-rayed, but yet treating them sympathetically.

But even Madame Morin, I found with delight, was not infallible. I was fairly taken aback when she raised to sainthood a gentleman whom we both knew. My attempts to give him a more human setting were brushed aside by a laugh from Madame Morin and the remark, "but he is a saint." (For the benefit of my sensitive nationalist friends—and for my own safety—I might add here that it was not Mahatma Gandhi.) And it was all the more a surprise because I was not accusing him of any secret vice but of the frailty that many great men have more or less—and rather more than less—of finding a special pleasure in entertaining women.

There was a meeting of the Quakers at a place outside Paris to which I went. We were all seated on the lawn and I had to my right a lady who was going out on a mission to Madagascar and who had solemnly assured me not to start that evening to convert the heathen; on my left an American, the wife of a Professor. She asked me a few formal questions. Then suddenly the blow fell.

"Where," she inquired, "did you learn English? You speak it very well."

W E S T O F S U E Z

I thanked her for the compliment but I added that a good knowledge of English was not uncommon in India where we spent most of our lives learning the language. She looked surprised at me, smiled dubiously and turned to her neighbour on the other side. I walked away a little later and when I came back, Mrs. Harvey was eying me with amusement.

She called me to where she was and asked, "Mr. Natarajan, what is this secret you have kept from us all these days you lived at our place; and now you have given it out to this lady?"

"What is it?" I asked, surprised.

"You told her," said Mrs. Harvey, "that you learnt to speak English from one of your wives."

I was taken aback. Otherwise I would not have denied it so vehemently. The prospective Madagascar missionary whispered to me that she had not misunderstood my remark and that I had definitely ascribed my knowledge of English to my having learnt it, like other Indians, for a good part of my life. I asked Mrs. Harvey when the excitement was over, what she had said in my defence.

"Oh," she said gaily, "I told her not to believe everything you said because you are given to pulling people's legs; but I was surprised that you should have started on her as soon as you were introduced."

I am afraid I lost a friend that day. The American lady did not enjoy the frequent references to my many wives which formed a great part of the conversation that afternoon.

Another contact I formed through the Harveys was Mr. Culver from the United States who in company managed to put on a thoroughly befuddled look but relaxed when one caught him alone. He was a completely disillusioned man in matters pertaining to Europe. The improvement travel had made on

INCIDENTS AND INDIVIDUALS

his mind, was to convince him that there was nothing like the United States.

It is easy to make friends when there is a group like the Circle International and I have pleasant recollections of the evenings spent with its members. The only trouble was a tendency on their part to forget there could be someone in Paris who did not understand French. Of the two Australians who formed a link, one had, or said she had, almost forgotten her English. There was a play at the Sorbonne and I decided to go to it with the group. Fortunately I had years ago in an idle moment read Aeschylus' "The Persians" and was able to follow the story without much effort. The music arranged by a bright young student was less unusual to me than it was to others. My Australians who seemed exceedingly bored with the whole business, would turn to me now and then with the whispered and unnecessary explanation, "Messenger of Darius" or "Ghost of Darius." Fortunately too the acting was in the open quadrangle. There was considerable histrionic talent.

It is not my experience alone which makes me conclude that France, even Paris, is delightful to visit—only to those who know French. In this respect it resembles the British Isles. I had queued up at the banking counter of the American Express Co. in Paris when I felt a hand on my shoulder. Turning round to see what new problem was in store, I met the troubled eyes of a young American woman who inquired, "Say, can you speak English?" I said I could but that it seemed to be of little use in the absence of a knowledge of French. She told me I could manage in Paris but outside I would be completely lost if I knew no French. She said that her husband had queued up at the next counter and as it seemed more likely that she would get through before him she wanted to go and call him; and she asked me to keep her place for her while she fetched the mere male along. I asked her where the

W E S T O F S U E Z

gentleman was. She pointed out a bald bespectacled man who was smiling pathetically at her and at the cashier alternately.

Keeping places is always a stiff job. To do so in a country where you do not know the language is a nightmare. So I gallantly told her to keep my place or lose it—I did not care very much—but that I would fetch the gentleman. The American man in foreign countries apparently will only listen to his wife; she said that he might not come unless she went to get him. She went off and returned later to tell me that it was all right and that he had managed to get his money.

Neither of them knew French and both were lost in admiration of the Fascist States where, even if people were anxious to stuff you with their point of view, they took the trouble to keep you busy and interested in the country. As I felt that a guiding hand would be not unwelcome here I advised them to seek an understandable Paris in the Gardens, the public grounds and along the banks of the Seine. I myself have spent hours in these places. I have seen the bookstalls and the little shops along the riverside opened by their owners in the morning and hastily shut up as the rain came on; the artists who from every conceivable angle seek inspiration in Notre Dame and welcome the appreciation of even a passing stranger; the earnest fishers who lean over the small bridges and the little crowd that stands around them watching intently; and on the side away from the river the cloth shops, the shops that deal in secondhand suits, the vegetable shops and beyond the bigger, more modern stores. I do not know whether they took my advice. The advantages of telling the fellow tourist what he should do is that you need never know his contempt for your wisdom.

The days round July 14 are gala days in Paris. On the night of the 13th there were crowds all over the streets, troops march-

INCIDENTS AND INDIVIDUALS

ing and all the features of a carnival. There was an Arab who kept the crowd aghast as he swallowed lighted torches.

I was with an American group—Mrs. Harvey, Mr. and Mrs. Culver, an American Friend, Mrs. Alley, and her daughter—which joined the International Circle in seeing Paris. Up to the Hotel de Ville we kept with the rest. Madame Morin left us there and the others disappeared we did not know where. Mrs. Harvey led us to a cafe near the Opera and to the pleasure of serving ourselves as the waiters were on strike. Mr. Culver's knowledge of French evaporated at the opportunity to use it and while he was explaining what we wanted, I took what we had been specially told to get, a bun, paid for it and carried it out. A second trip brought disaster on me. I collided with a man and brought a few glasses down. I was pleasantly surprised when I got off without paying for the damage. Ultimately, we had to requisition Mrs. Harvey's services to collect what we needed.

On the morning of the 14th there was a military parade which resembled the parades of other countries very closely. The Moorish troops made as bright a splash of colour here as the Indians had done at the Coronation. The behaviour of the crowd rather surprised me. It was enthusiastic but restrained in its conduct. And it did not take the people very long to resume their normal sedate walk away from the grounds.

There was a demonstration in the afternoon and I missed it because I was out with the Harveys visiting a fellow-worker at the Centre in his home. Even had I been in the city I do not think I would have gone to see it. It was a sunny afternoon and we had a pleasant day out. From what I heard on my return the French take their politics more seriously than their army parades. July 14 is the anniversary of the storming of the Bastille. It is sometimes loosely

W E S T O F S U E Z

referred to as Independence Day but Mr. Culver objected strongly to it as it could mean only "independence from their own feudal lords."

There were dances in nearly all the streets. A girl usually stood in the centre of a ring of men and women and, as the music went on, the ring went rotating. Suddenly she threw a newspaper on the ground, knelt on it before any man in the ring. He knelt beside her and the two kissed and the dance went on again. Mr. Harvey explained this custom. He said that the two need have never known each other before. A refusal to comply with the woman's unspoken request would, he said, be a deadly insult. A quaint custom and embarrassing when one is with one's wife. Mr. Harvey stood us all carefully out of the ring.

It was late at night when we got back from walking the streets and covering the longer distances by the crowded Underground. There was no taxi to be had and what had started as a pleasure jaunt had grown monotonous. An early "breakfast"—or a late supper—and we turned in for the night. The next day I put in at the Exhibition, the first half of the day with Madame Morin.

III

The Paris Exposition was a welcome diversion to me. I had inquired of all I met whether the Exposition was good and the replies I received were confusing in the extreme. On the boat from Newhaven I was told by a Frenchman that the Exposition was not "finished"—I only learnt later that he meant not completed. In Paris itself there seemed to be a wide range of opinion—from those who disliked all Expositions, fairs and public functions to those who felt it was my duty to go because I had obtained a railway concession as a visitor to the Exposition. An Indian whom I met and who knew his

INCIDENTS AND INDIVIDUALS

Paris well, simplified matters for me by a formula. I have my doubts about the efficacy of this standard. "Believe me," he said, "if anyone runs down the Exposition, he is Fascist or Rightist. All Socialists and Leftists are eager to make the Exposition a success." This enabled me to classify the persons who discussed the Exposition with me but it gave me little insight into the quality of the display itself. Everyone spoke of the German and Russian pavilions facing each other and the competitive spirit in which each had striven to outbuild the other till the French Government intervened with a height limit. And almost all advised me to visit the Palace of Discovery and the Museum of Modern Art when it opened.

My first visit to the Exposition was with Mrs. Pillai, an Indian lady whom I had met in Madame Morin's house. The most striking feature of the Fair was the colossal figures of the working man with the hammer and the working woman with the scythe which topped the Russian Pavilion. Long before we neared the Exposition grounds we saw these two outstanding statues. And when we entered through the Trocadero gates, we saw the German eagle opposite the Soviet figures and on a level with them. It was a stroke of genius to place the German and Russian pavilions opposite each other, equal to British ingenuity in seating M. Litvinoff and Signor Grandi side by side in Westminister Abbey at the Coronation.

We got over our disappointment in not finding an Indian Pavilion and set about visiting the more important ones in the Exposition.

I had the pleasure of paying a second visit with a young Hollander who spoke only German, a third visit with two Australians and an American and a fourth by myself. It is difficult to say which one I enjoyed best. On the first visit Mrs. Pillai was anxious to see as much as possible in

W E S T O F S U E Z

two hours and so was I. On the second the young Dutchman took great delight in tickling the bare feet of the stone rider on the stag in front of the Norwegian pavilion and bursting into loud roars of laughter in which I joined. We helped each other in finding all the spots where one could get free eats and drinks. On the third we spent a good deal of time at the Peace Pavilion in front of the Exposition and in looking out for the Sultan of Maroc in front of the Dutch House. And the fourth I spent strolling through the sections I had missed on my previous visits. Add to this, two visits to the House of Discovery and a day at the Museum of Modern Art, and I wonder whether any non-Parisian has seen as much of the Exposition as I have done. A good few of the national pavilions were not completed when I visited the Exposition for the last time—July 16th, the U. S. A. Pavilion was to open “next Saturday;” the Mexican one was just ribs — but that was obviously not my fault.

I could easily have spent a good three days in each pavilion, a week in many of them. The poorest were the propaganda ones and, apart from the tribute to the Russian worker, on the top of the pavilion, the Soviet section was a poor show. There was a map of the Union done in precious and semi-precious stones, which attracted great crowds and emphasis was laid throughout on the industrial progress of the country under the Stalin regime.

The Nazi pavilion also erred on the propaganda side, stressing for its part the advance of science in the production of synthetic goods. I was not much interested in the display here because I had been to the main offices of the industry in Frankfurt. What impressed me more was the number of people stepping into the pavilion to photograph the Soviet structure. The Italian pavilion was about the most

INCIDENTS AND INDIVIDUALS

successful of this group because it blended political propaganda with general information. But of special significance was the section in this pavilion devoted to the conquest of Ethiopia. What had happened to non-recognition? The Palestine pavilion, relatively speaking a small one, told us how the country had progressed under the Jews but it gave little attention to the Arab population in Palestine.

Each nation took the occasion to advertise its products. Czech glasswork, Austrian music-scores of great composers in the original, Hungarian lace-work, Swiss watches and Egyptian cotton, lent themselves to some kind of display and aroused a certain interest in visitors. But the sports articles in the pavilion erected by Great Britain caused considerable amusement and few of us knew what to make of the formidable array of cricket-bats, hockey-sticks, tennis rackets and polo-sticks which had been assembled there. It is possible that the British were much too occupied with the Coronation to take any great interest in the Exposition.

The best of the pavilions was to my mind the Belgian one with its little garden and its Congo section. The whole plan was simple and effective. The less money spent on the Exposition the better seemed to be the results. The Dutch and the Norwegian sections—in the Norwegian there was a roughly carved statuette of a girl striding forward, which for boldness of line one can compare with some of the best in the Museum of Modern Art—deserve mention, though the former had (perhaps tactfully) not drawn much on its East Indies for material.

But the International Exposition has its lesson apart from the merits of individual units. There is perhaps today no nation more opposed to Fascism and Nazism than France. There is without doubt no country which stands to suffer more

W E S T O F S U E Z

from propaganda from these influences. Yet the French people played the host to Italy and Germany (and to Russia as well) to perfection. That nothing was done to impede their work of construction is shown by the fact that these were almost among the first to be completed. I asked an official where the French pavilion was. "The French?" he said with a smile, "all this" and he waved a hand in one comprehensive gesture, "is French."

From the other point of view Germany and Italy have little friendly feeling towards France. On the Spanish question they are bitterly opposed and for long it was a question of whether and when these countries would declare open war. Yet they set up expensive structures on French soil to advertise their products and policies. This seemed to me peculiar to the twentieth century—that nations should act on the basis of a permanent peace even while preparing for war. What one fails to understand is why India which can send bejewelled Princes and the finest contingent to grace the London Coronation and delight British hearts, is never allowed a fitting part in International Exhibitions. The Government of India seems to have carried the Congress policy of non-co-operation into all those spheres which are likely to advance India's international status.

If I felt I could have spent a week in some of the pavilions, I knew I could easily be a month in the House of Discovery. This museum was a study in the growth of modern science, a memorial to the renowned victories of peace. The development of the microscope, the camera and modern locomotion out of small beginnings, and the astronomical sections were things I could understand and appreciate in the short time I spent at the House. But not for the first time I felt ignorance of the language to be a grave handicap in getting the full benefit out of the exhibition here.

To many visitors the House of Discovery is the peak of the Exposition and, until I went to the Museum of Modern Art,

INCIDENTS AND INDIVIDUALS

I too felt that I should have concentrated on this section from the very first. July 15th I spent almost entirely at the Museum. For the first half of the day I had the incalculable advantage of having Madame Morin to enliven the monotony of walking past exhibits. Both of us had the habit of looking at items from a distance while we were inspecting some nearer object. And as next to seeing a good thing, the greatest pleasure lies in pointing it out to some one else, we called the other's attention to it as we walked up. What struck me most was the effect with which the exhibits had been arranged; the statues seemed in many places to have just stepped out of the tapestries which formed the background.

Madame Morin, on the other hand, drew my attention again and again to the remarkable resemblance to Indian and Oriental ornaments of the jewelled caskets and reliquaries. When I returned in the afternoon by myself I was able to "complete" the Exhibition (which I might not have done if Madame Morin had been with me) but I missed my "guide" who had instilled life into the exhibits earlier in the day. If the Paris Exposition had set up only the Museum of Modern Art and nothing else, it would have good reason to be proud of its achievement. It was the best laid out of the many museums I had seen in my tour. The unfortunate thing was that replicas or photographs of the objects which appealed most to me, were not on sale at the stall outside:

I left for Geneva on July 16th by noon.

CHAPTER XXI

A JOURNEY AND A HALT

Travel does not exactly correspond to the idea one gets of it out of most books of travels.—*Oliver Wendell Holmes.*

The Harveys saw me off at the station and it was Mrs. Harvey's foresight that took me to the train for the first time in my life well ahead of time. I had to leave my heavier luggage to be sent on later to Genoa and to my boat.

I have seldom met a more interesting crowd in a railway carriage than I did on the way to Geneva. There was on the seat opposite to me a Frenchman, middle-aged but prepared for any adventure. Next to him but travelling on her own, there was a Swiss woman whose weight had done little to subdue her frivolous nature. Across at the other end there were the mystery pair, an Italo-American woman on my side, and her all Italian escort opposite her. These two spoke to each other in Italian throughout; at intervals of fifteen minutes to a half-hour the lady would produce a thermos, pour out water into a cup, and the gentleman would conjure a little bottle out of his vest pocket, measure three drops into the cup and watch the woman drink it. Then he would repeat the process for himself. I was very much intrigued by this and the Frenchman was equally interested. It could not obviously be medicinal because of the frequent doses. It could scarcely be alcoholic since no one drinks alcohol in drops. Our curiosity was not satisfied.

A JOURNEY AND A HALT

There was a little by-play going on in the seat opposite me which distracted the Italian pair. The French gentleman was making advances to the Swiss charmer by his side. But all he got out of her were a number of "ouis" and a succession of giggles. When lunch drew the Italians out of the carriage, he invited the Swiss woman to lunch with him. She refused and looked exceedingly coy after that. A little later he asked her to walk with him in the corridor—a strange invitation—but she did not rise to the bait. I thought she was wise. Not all of us are built for walking through corridor carriages. The thought passed from me to the Frenchman. As I caught his eyes I saw him very deliberately close the one away from the woman. I responded suitably.

After that I felt that if I was not to be roped in as an accomplice of this romantic individual, I had best sleep for a time. I did and an hour later I awoke to a continuous giggling to see the gentleman all wreathed in smiles. He leaned forward in his seat and tapped my knee. "You speak English ?" he asked. I pleaded guilty. "I have just been telling this lady," he said by way of explanation, "that she has the most beautiful eyes. What do you think ?" "I expected this," I rejoined and then seeing it was beyond him, I put in, "Quite possible." He translated in high glee.

The possessor of the most beautiful eyes in the world threw me a ravishing glance before subsiding in giggles. Then she spoke. The gentleman translated, "She says that Indian women have much better eyes. You think so ?" I hastened to qualify my earlier statement so that patriotism and flattery might go hand-in-hand. "Their eyes might be better," I said modulating my voice to the right tone of conceding a contested point, "but they have not improved on nature to the extent this lady has. Look at the eyebrow," I remarked warming to my subject, "she has plucked it almost to a line."

W E S T O F S U E Z

My friend exclaimed that he did not like the plucked eyebrow, but he told his friend what I had said. She too did not like the plucked eyebrow. One would have thought that it was on my face the way they both condemned it.

The French traveller had much to say on the immorality that followed on the plucking of eyebrows. He cursed it as a gift from Hollywood. I thought on the other hand that the idea was taken from Egyptian art. After we had argued this abstract point for a good while, we descended to the particular. I asked why if the woman beside him disliked training the eyebrow, she had done it. The gentleman put the question pointing repeatedly to me to dissociate himself from this impertinence. She readily explained it as the tyranny of fashion. At this stage the arrival of the Italian-American party interrupted us.

The end of the journey was curious. The Swiss woman, I had been told by the gallant Frenchman, was going to Geneva to get married—a piece of information which when he told her of it, was evidently new to her and highly flattering in as much as she gushed forth an ardent, "Merci beaucoup, monsieur." The Italo-American, according to the same informant, was a wealthy woman visiting her ancestral country and a ward of the Italian travelling with her. Why she was travelling third was ingeniously explained by the word "eccentric," pronounced in a manner calculated to suppress further questions. Yet both women found themselves unattended at Geneva.

I thought at first that the Frenchman had decided not to risk an encounter with the fiancé of the Swiss lady and had made himself scarce. I handed her luggage out of the window, but when I left the platform she was still outside the station. The other lady was in difficulties in getting a porter, and after she had got one, she was trying her best to divide

A JOURNEY AND A HALT

her attention between the compartment and the platform. I offered to help and handed out the luggage to her porter from inside while she stood out and checked them.

As I was doing this I saw an Indian gentleman outside the railed platform watching me with an amused smile. It was my host, Mr. P. Raghunath Rao. I waved to him and he waved back. The Italo-American told me as I bade her good-bye, "I don't know why you took all that trouble. But it was exceedingly kind of you." I myself did not know why I had helped. The dread of falling into either extremes of well-intentioned awkwardness or of officious oiliness has, as a rule, preserved me from interfering even (and particularly) in the affairs of distressed damsels. It must have been a feeling of compunction after their consent to my smoking—thoughtlessly given when I asked for it—large doses of 'scafarlatti,' the French tobacco which even the French abhor.

The Customs inspection did not take long and I was very soon out on the right side of the station railings with Mr. Raghunath Rao. As I looked at my watch for the time, I noticed that the glass had been smashed to pieces and the hands had fallen out. It must have happened when I was handling out the heavy luggage through the window, and I noted it as a warning for the future. At the same time I appreciated that Fate could have scarcely chosen a gentler omen than smashing my watch in Geneva, the Mecca of the watch-buyer. It was easy to get it repaired and I had it done.

II

What are the sights of Geneva? They differ necessarily according to each individual. To most Indians the sights are the Lake, Monsieur Romain Rolland, the League of Nations institutions, Mont Blanc, and the glacier. To me the sights were the huge chillies I saw in the vegetable market into which

W E S T O F S U E Z

I strayed one day, Jupiter and Mars and Venus seen through a telescope on a clear night by the Lake for half a Swiss franc, Cafe Bavaria and the cartoon decorations on its walls, the Lake, the Reformation Monument, Mont Blanc (from a distance), the quaint little squares into which the streets run, and the League building.

To the traveller returning home, no better programme could be found than that I had at Geneva. I had, before going to the place, a dinner and a lunch engagement. For four days I spent the greater part of my time listening to orchestras by the Lakeside, losing my way and finding it again in Geneva which is a conveniently small place, and in peeping into watch shops.

On Saturday Mr. Rao drove in the afternoon into French territory some fifty miles out where Mrs. Rao was staying in a chalet. I went with him. At the border there was a little trouble with a man flying the Nazi Swastika flag on his car. The French official refused to let him pass until he removed the flag. Ultimately he did take it off. The official was greatly excited over the incident. Somehow he had conceived the idea that the man was a Jew and his indignation knew no bounds. We returned to Geneva the same evening.

My dinner was with Mr. Rajah of the International Labour Office. Mr. Rajah's home is a South Indian oasis in Geneva and I learnt later that the food and the welcome there make it a valuable means for keeping in touch with home for Geneva's "exiles." Both Mr. and Mrs. Rajah had grave doubts of my ability to find my way back after dinner, though it meant only a straight walk back along the Lake. Going home that night I appreciated the anxiety. There are many attractions by the Lake and I was caught by a man with a telescope who pointed a few stellar sights to those who looked for a change from the glittering lights and illuminated fountain by the Lake. The

A JOURNEY AND A HALT

astronomical guide used my presence to get a couple of others to his telescope.

On my way to the League on Sunday, I was stopped outside the International Labour Office by a motoring party who had just driven in. They wanted to know where the I. L. O. was and I pointed it out to them. As we did not know a common language I earned a cheap gratitude by handing over my copy of the Municipal guide map in three languages which was no longer of use to me since I was leaving in a couple of days.

Mr. Venkateswaran with whom I lunched that day at the Carlton Hotel, was full of the League of Nations. I was interested in the brave attempt he was making to "Indianise" the food at his hotel. He had put in a good stock of the raw material and was instructing the waiters on the intricacies of cooking. He introduced me to a couple of British journalists who were working on the Palestine Report at the time. From what I gathered from their remarks, the conservative journalist represented a Liberal newspaper and the broader-visioned writer was working for a Tory daily. The system seemed to work well. Apparently human nature being whatever it is, it is easier to argue a case one does not believe in. As Mr. Venkateswaran insisted, I visited the League buildings with a tourist party on Monday afternoon. One cannot but be impressed by the institutional success which has attended the peace movement both in Geneva and at the Hague. Americans who formed a good number of the sight-seers, commented among themselves on the grandeur of the building and the ineffectiveness of the League.

When I left Mr. Venkateswaran in the evening, Prof. P. V. Kane and his son were just coming in and I passed them little dreaming I would meet them again on the homeward voyage.

W E S T O F S U R E Z

One of my introductions was to Dr. A. de Maday and I found it difficult to get in touch with him. I succeeded, or rather Mr. Rao did for me, just the night before I left. Dr. Maday insisted on coming to see me at the station in the morning and suggested that we might breakfast together. This would have meant starting at six. And I vetoed it. When ultimately we reached the station just three minutes before the train was scheduled to leave, we found Dr. Maday waiting with a blanket in one hand and a slab of chocolate in the other. The first was for delivery to a friend of his in India. The second was for my consumption on the train. There was also a book to be delivered to his daughter in India, Mrs. Khanolkar, and, though it took time to reach her, it eventually did get there.

On Tuesday morning I left Geneva. I had two days more to fill in before my boat sailed from Genoa. What could I do with that time? It just crossed my mind that I might cable home that I would leave by the next boat and do Italy. Then I thought I may as well see how I liked the country before committing myself. Mr. Rao said that there was only one city where I could adapt myself to conditions in a day and that was Venice. For a time I toyed with the idea that I could see Venice on the 20th, Rome on the 21st, Florence on the 22nd and catch the boat a day later at Naples.

All these sight-seeing alternatives were running furiously through my mind during the journey to Milan. I scarcely noticed a stately gentleman who looked like General Balbo, and presumably his wife, who had entered the carriage at an intermediate station. They had taken seats at the other end of the carriage. I had finally resolved to go to Venice that evening from Milan and to decide later what next to do. The scenery was growing less attractive.

Relieved of both internal and external distractions, I turned to my companions in the train. The gentleman was consoling

A JOURNEY AND A HALT

the lady who seemed to be in acute distress. For all his beard he was a mild fellow. He patted her on the head very much as a man who is scared of a dog, would stroke it. When he looked in my direction and caught my eye, his beard went up to a straight right-angle with his neck and he looked at me over his beard and partly through it. The strain was too much for him and he gave it up. Then to assert his right over the lady (which no one had questioned) he raised her hand and kissed it.

As both of them showed a tendency to prove their devotion to each other for the rest of the journey, I restrained a generous impulse to offer them some of Dr. Maday's chocolate, and strolled out instead into the corridor. A little before Milan I came back and settled in my corner to be rewarded by a grateful smile from both parties. In fact, the gentleman actually tried to tell me to prepare for Milan.

There was half an hour for my train to Venice. It took me fully that time to fix my ticket at the booking-office. Very different was my company this time. An elderly couple were resting in the carriage and they made room for me as I entered the compartment. The woman knew a little English—to be exact she could understand if I wrote English words down on a piece of paper. I tired of this conversation and, after she had recommended a place in Venice to stay in, we all fell silent. They were kind enough to point out the sights on the way and I remember Padua which created a stir in them as we passed by it.

CHAPTER XXII

FAREWELL TO EUROPE

We know only that portion of the world which we have travelled over ; and we are never a whit wiser than our own experiences. Our knowledge is limited by ourselves, and so also are our imaginations.—*Alexander Smith.*

I was in Venice on the night of July 20 with my boat sailing from Genoa on the 22nd. Venice has been for generations an English superstition. There is scarcely a writer of distinction, bar Shakespeare, who has not gone into ecstacies over Venice.

I was looking forward to a celestial city, with every house a palace, every street a winding stream, every conveyance a graceful gondola—the word itself creating an after-dinner comfort tinged with romance within me—rowed by a romantic gondolier in lieu of the matter-of-fact, tip-begging taxi-driver. Venice may have been celestial a hundred years ago ; there was little difference in sanitation between the different states of Europe. But Venice, modern Venice, is in the process of becoming today. In a few years from now the city will be transformed beyond recognition. But now it is still one of the few ports which hang on an old, almost primitive, town.

Venice was glittering with a thousand lights when I came into it. I dined at the station restaurant and, determined not to follow the ordinary tourist track, I did unconsciously what several of my Indian friends touring Venice have done in the

FAREWELL TO EUROPE

past. I picked on the most respectable looking of the stragglers outside, handed my luggage over to him and told him to fix a place for me. I followed him through a dark and dingy side-street a few yards off the station. He halted in front of a closed dilapidated door, pulled the bell-rope and scratched himself behind the left ear. Footsteps shuffled to the entrance, the door opened to us with a metallic clutter, and an old woman beamed amiably on my companion.

We went in after preliminary negotiations. A large hall which looked like a courtyard and was sparsely furnished, with a staircase at the far end leading to a little room near a landing, met the eye. The light in the room was dim. We walked past the landing higher up the stairs; with an air of triumph, the landlady threw open a door which hung loose on its hinges. Here was my bedroom. In the room there were two beds—a single bed near the wall, a double one in the centre. A basin and a jug on a tumble-down dressing-table in one corner, a chair near the double-bed, an old cupboard by the door, completed the furniture. The window was closed securely down.

No man in his senses would have taken the room. Something of my aversion showed on my face and looking up I saw the landlady and a younger woman who had come in silently, eye each other unhappily. I gave in. After all it was only for a night. They inquired eagerly of my guide which bed I wished to sleep in. I chose the double-bed. There was a snigger all round which nearly made me change my mind. There was a discussion on the bill. They demanded forty liras. We finally settled at thirty. I knew this was fifteen too much but had no wish to argue the point.

As I turned to get out on an exploratory tour, the guide plucked at my sleeve. "For another ten lira," he said with a smirk, patting the double bed and leering at me, "Madame

W E S T O F S U E Z

will—". It is my misfortune that I can never summon up enough patience to hear the other fellow out. "Not another lira," I shouted, "and if I take this room I must be left alone, while I am here." Further consultations with my guide looking downcast and obviously annoyed with me. I won my point.

I wandered through Venice from street to street. I. was an intriguing maze. Do what I would, I could not get back to the station. A visit to a cafe for black coffee, to a tobacconist for cigars, and I was out again on the street. At last I came to a bridge and not wishing to walk back on the same side of the canal, I crossed over. But all the buildings looked unfamiliar. I recrossed over another bridge and came on to a deserted road. A little further down I passed three men singing to the night. I hurriedly left them behind. To my left the sound of swishing waters. I was by the sea. I walked on to the left. In the distance the lights of a steamer shone brightly. I kept on. A figure ahead of me turned down a narrow lane and was lost.

Further on I saw a man in uniform and I asked him the way to the "Stazione." He was puzzled. "Stazione Marritime?" he queried. I brought out my bunch of railway tickets. "Stazione ferrovia," I answered. He directed me to keep on on my way. I came at last to a square from which several buses left. Entering a bus I asked for the stazione ferrovia. "Mestre?" asked the conductor. I knew no more, but I nodded my head.

For half an hour I went riding in the bus down a magnificent road. I was obviously going astray. A little discussion with the conductor and two fellow passengers put me right. The station I wanted I had left behind long ago. It was only a few yards away from the square I had started from. The station I was headed for was Mestre on the mainland. The

FAREWELL TO EUROPE

conductor looked sympathetically at me and, when all the passengers had got off, helped me into a bus going back to Venice. He told the conductor to put me off at the station and to show me the way. When we reached the square, the second conductor took me to the left, asked me to get down some steps and then turn right for the station. In five minutes I was before my lodging.

A tug at the bell-rope and with muttered curses the woman inside came to the door and, after peeping at me, opened it cautiously. She showed me to my room. When I made for the window, she stopped me; it was not to be opened. The previous night there had been a gale or so I understood her vigorous gestures. She showed me the bed made up for the night. Then at the door she hesitated and turned back. She poured her eloquence at me for two minutes. I shook my head at the end of it. I had failed to get her meaning. Then followed gestures which seemed equally unintelligible. Suddenly I knew. The good woman was trying to tell me where the lavatory was. Finally she took me down to the landing. The small room on it was a lavatory and a most inconvenient one at that. I wished her good-night.

Inside my room it took me some time to bolt the door from within. Then I turned to the window. A little effort and it came open—and precariously open. A gust of wind bore into the room. I was fixed for the night. What matter if one of the windows looked about to drop in pieces? In the morning I settled my bill and breakfasted at the station.

And then I saw the tourist's Venice. As a complete picture, Venice is a pleasing sight. It is like the mosaic work for which the town is famous. Each little piece looks rough-cut but the whole combines to form a dainty miniature. There is not any special architectural elegance in many of the buildings

W E S T O F S U E Z

there. In fact some of them look garish to eyes accustomed to more formal styles. The Italian genius has been at work to mingle Eastern and Western influences in a unity at Venice, and it has to a certain extent succeeded. Where it has failed, the effort is most distinguishable.

A nation that inflicts on its men the rigorous discipline of the dress suit and the starched shirt, can well enjoy the easy freedom of the Venetian. Englishmen tired of the subdued austerity of their national life, go berserk at painted Venice. Americans after a life of dollar-earning and during hectic intervals, see romance and glamour in the poorer life of the Venetian. People who would think twice before stepping into an untidy conveyance, enter a "gondola" with expectation. The gondolier may be songless as he was in Byron's days, but he is no longer silent. Any one who wants to experience my feelings can do so easily in a fishing boat in Bombay harbour.

I picked up a guide near the Rialto. He was lounging about with nothing to do and he offered to do the city with me for twenty liras. My guide was a quaint fellow. Years of trotting American tourists round Venice had corrupted his gentle soul. He laid unfortunately more value on the readiness of his replies than on accuracy and I had to supplement his wisdom with the knowledge of the guide-book. At the Ducal Palace, he took me through at a rapid pace until I warned him of the uselessness of hustling me. On the road he would hurry through, forgetting that for the stranger getting to a place might be as interesting as reaching it.

We passed through several narrow streets. At one I was attracted by the fact that several women who were going in a group ahead of us, paused to look down the lane with considerable amusement. I too looked. There were a few

FAREWELL TO EUROPE

young men, old men, middle-aged men lined up against a wall which had side partitions but no protecting wall from the road. It was a public convenience and apparently a novelty for the place. My guide hustled me past it and endeavoured earnestly to impress on me that it was most unusual. I do not know how far he was right. My thoughts went back to the many discussions I had had with an Englishman from Africa who always brought his arguments justifying the unequal treatment of Indians to a disgust at the absence of civic sanitary ideas in Indians. But then he probably thought poorly of the Italians as well and of all others who lived outside a modern town. The question was, it seemed to me, a municipal rather than a national one.

The guide found many of my questions irrelevant and I was not particularly anxious to have them answered. The only bit of information he gave me, which I was ready to question, related to the Bridge of Sighs. He believed that the Venetians had read the name in Byron's 'Childe Harold's Pilgrimage' and decided to adopt the name for the bridge. I asked him how many tourists he had said that to. Oh, many, he replied, he had been in the business for years. He landed me at 2 o'clock at a Venetian glass-work shop where I made, for the first and last time, a tourist purchase. Then he put me in a vegetarian restaurant and left.

I was at the station an hour later and soon I entrained for Genoa. In the long and tedious journey I met an English-speaking Italian who expressed considerable pride in the fact that the train had started in time. He had a warm feeling for my country, he assured me. But it was a damper to my patriotic gratitude when he added, "I have always desired to see your great cities, Singapore, Hong Kong, Shanghai and Delhi." Then he told me how the Italians disliked the British who had fooled half the world for so long. They were

W E S T O F S U E Z

all, he said, for freedom. I asked him whether he disapproved of the Ethiopian campaign. He looked astonished. "But don't you see," he asked, "what a shrewd blow to the British that was?" I did not see. For a good part of the journey he tried to convince me. Then he lapsed into silence. Half an hour more and I was in Genoa. Yet another fifteen minutes and I was wondering whether it had all been a dream.

On the night of July 21, I was in Genoa—and not a day too early. As I had strayed into bad quarters in Venice, I strayed into a luxurious hotel in Genoa. And as I had taken the bad as it came to me, I made the most of the advantage.

II

July 22nd. Glorious day. I stepped out of my hotel to the American Express to gather my mail. Then I looked in at the Lloyd Triestino Office to see if three of my trunks had been sent on from Paris and to get my ticket. The trunks had arrived but my ticket would be given me on the pier. Back to my hotel where I wrote a few farewell letters, settled my bill before I left. The usual waiting in silent adoration before the closed door of the police office on the pier, the formalities before we obtained permission to depart and we were through.

There were, I noticed, a great number of Indians among the passengers. As I walked alongside the m. v. Victoria I saw an Indian lady sitting on her suitcase looking dejectedly (or philosophically) in front of her. "Lucky one," I muttered to myself, "at least she knows where her baggage is." And then it struck me that if she were only a little stouter, she would be Dr. Miss Shrikhande. She might be. But of that later, I said to myself, first let me get my things straightened out.

My typewriter, suitcase and handbag were at last recovered and with a clear mind I got on board. Now I had to fix my table in the dining-saloon and I would be free to look about me.

FAREWELL TO EUROPE

I approached the chief steward and discussed the matter with him. As I was talking it over, an old Gujarati lady approached us and wanted something. She asked me if I knew Gujarati and I said I understood it. Then she told me to inform the steward that she wanted to get off the boat and did not know the way out. The steward when I told him what she wanted, was more anxious to tell her that the boat started at three than to show her the way. When I pointed out this irrelevance, he replied that she could go out the way she came in. I took her near the exit and then returned to my job. She had undertaken the voyage to England and back, I learnt later, to see her son who was reading for the I. C. S. Examination.

Out of the corner of my eye I saw the lady of the suitcase trying to move two ways at once. I decided on action. If she happened to be Miss Shrikhande, it would be a feather in my cap if I recognised her before she knew me. If she was not, we were bound to get acquainted in the next eleven days and we might as well start at once. So I plucked up courage and went over with an "Excuse me but are you Miss Shrikhande ?" "Yes," she said tentatively. "Natarajan," I said with the air of one producing a trump card (from up his sleeve) as I put forth my right hand. With Indian ladies, foreign-travelled in particular, this has to be done before they have time to think ; otherwise the sensitive young man will be put out with a *namaskar* which puts him in his proper place—like the serpent in Eden after the curse of God.

She had some shopping to do and we went out to do it. I am always interested in shopping—when someone else does the paying—and I thoroughly enjoyed myself.

An Indian woman is an asset when you try to find your way about in a foreign country and I am afraid I left all the

W E S T O F S U E Z

inquiring to Miss Shrikhande who seemed to revel in it. Subsequent discussions at the lunch and dinner table revealed that she was astutely conscious of the attention she had attracted and had liked it well. I, though I say it myself, am of a retiring disposition. On board again there was my friend Khambatta, busy as ever, doing nothing in particular. I was quick to grasp the possibilities of the situation and I asked Miss Shrikhande if she minded his joining us at table. She had no objection and I gave him a testimonial by saying he was an old schoolmate, which might mean anything. Miss Biswas, a friend of Miss Shrikhande, joined us for tea and two days later she was at our table for all meals. It was the liveliest table and, till the ship started rolling, Mr. Khambatta kept us well-fed and well-entertained. We had only one really bad day and, though Khambatta took all the six specifics against sea-sickness circulating on the ship, he was flat on his back.

To Mr. Khambatta his duties did not end at the table. In his thoughtful care and attention, the two Indian ladies found some amusement and much strength. I was less conscientious. But I was excused as a journalist. We were made conscious of the presence of some Indian princes on board by eleven cars cumbering the second class sports deck. It was a subject for conversation almost every morning and I am afraid there were many anti-Princes growing among us. If the coming Federation is to be a welcome event there should be other arrangements for States cars.

We were intensely political at my table, myself the least so. Khambatta was as anxious as a journalist to find out Italian discontent against Signor Mussolini and to collect opinion on a pet theory of his that the Italian jaws were opening for another colonial morsel, this time India. So hot was he on the trail, that I would not have been surprised if the four of us

FAREWELL TO EUROPE

(for with characteristic generosity he always included us in one large gesture) had been taken off to "visit" Abyssinia in chains.

To me the main fact, sad to say, was getting back home. Everything else was just filling up time. Even the heat found me wet but uncomplaining though I was the only one in winter clothes—by necessity. Miss Biswas was rather overwhelmed by a sense of responsibility for the good behaviour of all Indians but managed to surmount it at times. Dr. Vora and a young medical student, a Muslim, completed this group which was conservative in action and almost radical in outlook. There was another group extremely radical in outlook and most interested in the behaviour of other passengers, particularly in the long hours between sunset and midnight. There were the bridge tables, the bar frequenters (mostly Indians who bid a long lingering farewell to Europe), the music lovers who were a nuisance to us all, the sun-bathers and there was Dr. P. V. Kane who formed a group in himself sitting in the smoking-room, not smoking but reading a book. Dr. Kane as a Sanskrit scholar entertained and educated us with quotations from the classics in support of the most modern habits. My room-mates were a young law student with a fine sense of humour and a judicial officer who provided us with raw material for our jokes. He had my sympathy because he alternated between moods of depression when he used to appeal to me to keep him company because he had no one to talk to, and Napoleonic moods when nothing was beyond him and no one too big for him.

I had on the voyage out seen Indians in a minority. Now they were the vast majority on board. I preferred the group I was in on the first trip on the Victoria. This was a superficial crowd. The only set who were prepared to discuss serious things were a bunch of youngsters who felt that everything was wrong in India. The musical group nearly drove us mad with

W E S T O F S U E Z

their harmonium but we could not protest as they would dub us anti-national.

All these days away from India one had idealised the country and the people. Here was India in miniature with all the provincialism, the communalism and the pettiness of little groups, as bad as Europe at its worst. It surprised me that people who had spent years abroad, should still believe in the special virtue of their own little sect. And yet I preferred them to the other extremists who felt themselves too good for their country.

July 31 was a red-letter day on the boat. We had received the Indian papers at Aden and many of us had been waiting just for that. We read with a thrill the names of the Congress cabinets in the provinces. Here at last were "our" men. Mr. Rajagopalachari's stepping out in the rain to speak with the P. W. D. men on strike was duly applauded. His settlement of the strike in two days was greeted as promise of things to come. There was not an Indian who did not rejoice at the change. I noticed that even those who had opposed office acceptance were glad. I was one of them myself. Subtle is the force of propaganda. At the back of my mind, the thought arose how much wiser it would have been if I had taken up an attitude of indifference to what was a question of policy rather than of principle. There was no room for the doubts and fears that may arise later on. The Government machine was no longer a machine. It had grown strangely human. Indian officials and semi-officials on the boat were the most enthusiastic. At twelve o'clock came the wireless sheet. For the first time India was in the news. Freedom of organisation and release of political prisoners amid rejoicings in Bombay and elsewhere, reported the wireless news. We could hardly hold ourselves in patience till we reached Bombay.

FAREWELL TO EUROPE

August 2. All of us are agog. A few hours and we shall get home. I try to sit still but cannot. In one of my frequent trips to my cabin I find Khambatta in my room having a quiet shave. "Step across to my cabin and see for yourself," he says pathetically. He is just across. I do so and see the bleary-eyed all but inebriated, music-lovers settled round a harmonium, raising a racket. I beat a hasty retreat. On deck I join a group which passes the dragging minutes by false alarms of sighting Bombay.

Bombay. Photographs of groups, farewells, and we are in port. Has anyone come to see me? asks each one anxiously of himself. I know they will come but I do not know where to look. Right at the end behind the railings there is persistent waving. I wave back and look closely. More wavings and we have met. Why do they keep them out like this? demands an angry voice at my elbow. It seems that people have come to greet the princes and the rest must be kept back till they are well in. More anti-prince remarks. In no other country would this be tolerated, says my neighbour. What does it matter now? In a few minutes it will be over.

We turn to the passport officer. There is some confusion and then the words "permitted to land" appear on our passports. Another burst of indignation about being "permitted to land in our own country." I am more concerned about getting through the Customs than about protesting against an empty formula. I have brought nothing to declare.

Yes, I am home again.

EPILOGUE

A desirable social order is one that delivers us from avoidable evils. A bad social order is one that leads us into temptations which, if matters were more sensibly arranged, would never arise.—*Aldous Huxley*.

Indians who go abroad are in many respects better equipped than Europeans who come out to India. We know fairly well what to expect when we get there. If there is anything that surprises us, it is more a matter of degree than of kind. On the other hand, our European friends come prepared for the worst. For that matter I met an Indian in Geneva who came to India after twelve years. He was so scared at the thought that he took six different inoculations—anti-typhoid, anti cholera, and so on—before starting out, and carried a box of specifics against cobra-bites and scorpion-stings with him throughout India. The only danger we have to guard against abroad, is political indiscretion and we have studied political prophylaxis under the world's best masters.

Yet we are at a disadvantage. The European in the East carries his "civilisation" with him. We have to put through a complete change over. Of all the transformations one has to undergo, none could be more difficult than those necessitated by the change from a running-water civilisation to a still-water one, from a water civilisation to a paper one. I never reconciled myself to a bath in the stagnant waters of a tub.

E P I L O G U E

Then there is the question of manners. I have never heard so many "thank you's" and "excuse me's" in my whole life as I have met with in my five months' visit to Europe. On the voyage back we asked Dr. P. V. Kane, the eminent Sanskrit scholar, why there was no equivalent for the first of these phrases in Indian languages. He had a ready answer. "The little things of life," he remarked with a twinkle, "do not require any thanks. In greater obligations the phrase is inadequate and Indian languages have more appropriate words to express gratitude."

There is a world of truth in this. Talk of the politeness of the Oriental, it is not more, not less, only different compared to the politeness of the Occident. A man who is feeling blue-murder because you have been sitting on the salt, will thank you when you do pass it to him. This is a minor matter. Take the more intricate business of saying good-bye. The guest invariably says that it has been a great pleasure, etc., etc., instead of offering, as an Indian would, to repeat the visit. The modern "See you some time" must, I am sure, be a Western adaptation of Indian usage. When the host or hostess who has listened with admirable patience to uninteresting small talk or embarrassing politics, remarks smilingly, "Must you go so soon?" this is not to be taken at its face value. It rarely is an invitation to prolong your stay. It is an instance of social endurance. I learnt this at a cost. There is a precise point at which it is time to break up a party, without cutting your fellow-sufferers short in the exposition of some minor problem of life and at the same time without inflicting your company on others. I never can recognise the golden moment.

There are other problems—national problems, I might say—which vary from country to country, like asparagus eating. I have seen asparagus eaten with two forks, with one fork and with no fork at all, and I cannot for the life of me remember where I have seen it. Hat-raising is another trap for the unwary.

W E S T O F S U E Z

On the Continent, this is an ordinary courtesy which develops almost into a nightmare. Every shop you enter you have to go solemnly through this ceremony before stating your needs. In the United Kingdom a more practical policy is followed, and the hat stays on your head under pain of your being thought obsequious.

Like other Indians I too started on my journey with the intention of honestly answering as well as I could questions relating to India. I was like other Indians surprised at ignorance in quarters where knowledge was to be expected ; at information where ignorance could be excused. A European tour has one bad effect on the Indian mind. It teaches you a thousand deceipts and subterfuges.

Take my own case. When I first met people in Europe, I was asked, "Do you know Mahatma Gandhi ?" I answered quite honestly that I had seen Mahatmaji about four times at close quarters in my life, addressed about half a dozen remarks to him, had heard him more often, seen him oftener still. The question dogged me right through Europe. Towards the end I gave up the qualifying clauses and just said "Yes." The interest in Gandhiji varies from country to country but persists. In some places they will question you on his pacifism—in Germany in whispers ; in others on his diet and they will argue it out with you ; in Britain if you escape with only three inquiries on the number of wives he has, you may deem yourself fortunate. I never reached the stage which one Indian gentleman demonstrated in my presence. Asked if he knew Gandhiji, he answered "Gandhiji ? my dear fellow, thchhch." When I asked the other man what he had understood from this, he said that the gentleman knew Gandhiji intimately.

If you can escape the Gandhi test and if you survive the palmistry questions—and with a little intelligence and adroitness

E P I L O G U E

they can be got over—you will reap the benefit of being an Indian. If you talk too much, you will be excused for your verbosity as an Indian. If you keep silent you will be condoned for your Indian taciturnity. If you close your eyes, mystic qualities will be attributed to you. If you keep them wide-open, you will be complimented on your alertness. In short, the Indian moves in an atmosphere all his own, and it is all that he can do to get out of it. Generally speaking, he is welcomed everywhere. Friends who have had more experience—whether they stayed longer or less in Europe—object that I have no knowledge of the two conditions in which the Indian is not looked favourably on: When he is short of money and when he goes about with the women of the country he temporarily stays in. I concede lack of knowledge. But I think that these conditions would operate just as unfavourably against foreigners in India.

There is a Europe in reaction as well as a progressive Europe. The best illustration of this is the response in Britain to my remarks on the difficulty of gauging the limits of chivalry. When should one give up one's seat in the Underground? This was a real problem in Coronation days when every train was packed. To give up your seat when everyone else is sticking to his, is a difficult act. It attracts notice and there is the risk that the offer might be resented and flatly refused. The obvious course, along the line of least resistance, was the one I invariably adopted. It was not to sit down at all from the beginning.

'This was a joke to many of my friends—a joke which I too appreciated. To a man who has little small talk in him any opening is welcome. I sought guidance. More than one English woman told me that, if the person standing was a working girl, she had no claim on my consideration. She had taken up a man's job and must suffer a man's disabilities. On the other hand, if she was only returning from a shopping expedition, she should be shown some sympathy. This was

W E S T O F S U E Z

told me in all seriousness and I was regarded as factious when I urged that a woman who has been out shopping, was likely to be less tired than the worker. The feeling is not only strong in women who shop themselves, which would be understandable ; it exists even in persons who work themselves or whose daughters go to work in an office. There is little to distinguish this attitude from the Nazi view of women's role in life.

II

The night before I left Paris, I was walking with Mr. and Mrs. Harvey on the Boulevard St. Michael. Mr. Harvey asked me how my visit to Europe would affect me when I returned to India. I expressed doubts of my ability to settle down to serious work after five months of rushing furiously about. I told Mr. Harvey that to some people the mere fact of my having gone out of the country would give me a certain enhanced value. He smiled as he said that it was the same in America. The process there, from what I gathered, works in reverse. We consider that a visit to Europe has a modernising influence. Americans regard it as an opportunity of getting in touch with an older civilisation. Many of my American and Australian friends have told me that they were rather awed by the antiquity of Europe. I on the other hand am impressed by its youthfulness. Thus the world revolves round the European axis. The only continent which is self-satisfied is Europe, where people feel the Orient is decrepit and America and Australia infantile.

Mr. Harvey's next question was the consequence of the first. He asked me what I thought of Europe. I remember remarking to him that Europe had not finished the last War and that she would only settle down to a quiet existence after fighting it completely out. Mrs. Harvey rejoined that it had been tried in 1914 and that it had not proved successful. After a few minutes' thought, Mr. Harvey spoke with just a trace

E P I L O G U E

of annoyance in his voice. He said that the trouble with "you young people" was that we were afraid of being serious. It rankled for it was true. The next few paragraphs are my belated answer to Mr. Harvey's question.

I am scarcely competent to assess the religious life of Europe. What that is in many countries, can be seen from the press. My work with the Fellowship of Faiths in Britain brought home to me the fact that there is considerable apathy towards any form of organised religion. Speakers at the meetings bore frequent witness to the fall in attendance in their churches. If one remembers that there is no alternative to Christianity in the West, it would not be an exaggeration to say that conventional forms are beginning to repel people. Even the enthusiasm with which strange creeds are met, bears proof of the fact. People are more frank in their religious attitudes nowadays because social persecution by the orthodox has become impossible with the decline in power and prestige of the Church. At the same time, it would be but fair to mention that men of real religious conviction are on the increase. All of us are in the same boat. The advantage lies, if anything, with Indians who grow up among a multiplicity of creeds.

I feel that Europe has come ripe for Socialism. I am not, let me state, a believer in any particular economic or political system. It has become increasingly evident that whatever the party in power it has felt impelled to show, as never before, that it is doing well by the workers—better than any other party in that country, or for that matter in the world, could or would do. In contrasting German "prosperity" with non-German conditions, Nazis often told me that the working classes were better off than in Soviet Russia or in Democratic England. The British pointed to their labour class as well off to an inimitable degree. And so it was with all others. It is the nemesis of democracy. For in any community,

W E S T O F S U E Z

if you enfranchise an entire population, the "have nots" are bound to predominate and they are equally bound to cast "covetous" eyes on the wealthy sections of society.

All Europe today is edging or rushing to Socialism. The frequent labour disputes themselves are, to my mind, proof of this. When labour has won all its rights, it will be impelled to turn its mind to the responsibilities it must undertake. That again can only be possible under a form of Socialism. Fascism, it has often been remarked, is the last defence of capitalism. This seems to me a misreading of the situation. In so far as it enforces certain rules on the capitalist and restrains his activities, it is, if anything, socialistic. It is transitional—educational socialism, if you please—but there can be no doubt where the next step will take it. India has yet a good way to go. No nation, in the first place, attained the socialist state before it won independence. Then again with wide-spread illiteracy, "socialism" can mean a worse form of "exploitation," political and economic, and not necessarily a better form.

Few of us differentiate between European culture and European civilisation. Lin Yu-tang's Chinaman who sells tooth-paste in a tube and thinks he is bringing Western civilisation to China or translates free verse and calls it the introduction of Western Culture, might be naive, but at least he makes a distinction. The social, national and economic adaptations consequent on the industrial revolution in Europe found an evil expression in colonialism. The national suspicions that clog progress in the nineteen-thirties, are the consequences of the colonialism of the nineteenth century as surely as that was the outcome of the earlier eras of discovery. When all Asia and, even, more, all Africa have been put under White domination, it is only natural that national jealousies should awaken in the White Continent. There is today no external enemy to unite Europe

EPILOGUE

as there has been in decreasing measure since the Crusades. General Smuts in a radio talk last year referred to the danger of the East taking advantage of Western dissensions but nobody regards this as other than a frantic effort to save Europe. Such appeals have been tried even before the War and they have failed. They will not succeed now when, under the self-determination of nations ideology, Europe is split into so many small States, each jealous of the rest.

It is my fear that the southern and eastern parts of Eurasia will be forced to follow the dangerous example set by the western, European, part. More mischief has been done by the application of the peculiar nationalism enunciated at the Peace Conference, than most of us are aware of. On that basis, the United States would not last two decades as a national unit. India too has suffered by it. The British cannot support "self-determination" in Europe and at the same time claim credit for "fusing many races" into one nation in India. Already we have the "autonomous provinces." There is even some talk of partitioning India into Muslim and Hindu States. China is being broken up before our very eyes into little States. If this continues, we shall see the history of the last twenty years in Europe repeated through a large part of the world. And the process will not stop there either. But already Europe has launched a counter-movement. Whatever one may think of the German-Austrian Anschluss, it means one frontier less in Central Europe.

It is just over a year since I returned from Europe. I had a feeling when I was in Germany that the Nazi Government had not very long to live—at the outside two years. Friends in Britain expressed surprise at this impression I had brought away from Germany. They would not believe that the Nazi party was not as disciplined and compact as they had been led to think. And now, with the help of the imperialist democracies, Herr Hitler has raised himself, his party and his country to

WEST OF SUEZ

a position of dominance over Europe. The pact of Munich, the dismemberment of Czechoslovakia and the subsidence of the League of Nations marked the end of a period, the period of Anglo-French supremacy. A fear has taken hold of the minds of leaders in the democracies, which has no parallel except in that with which Christianity watched the progress of the armies of Islam across the continent of Europe. And now as then there is nothing to sustain the retreating peoples but the possibility that the conqueror might crash under the weight of his conquest. For it is not impossible that the Nazi structure might not be able to bear the increasing burdens placed on it each succeeding year.

To the mass of people in any country it matters very little which political party runs the administration, so long as they can conduct their lives normally and with a measure of certainty as to the future. But neither of these two is possible in the political disequilibrium which rules Europe today. The history of man's progress through the ages is the history of man's conquest of fear. A definite setback to this progress is indicated by the concessions made, under fear of war, by the democratic leaders of Europe to the totalitarian dictators.

